

THE Atlantic

NOVEMBER 2005

THE WRATH OF KHAN

HOW A.Q. KHAN MADE
PAKISTAN A NUCLEAR
POWER—AND SHOWED
THAT THE SPREAD OF
ATOMIC WEAPONS
CAN'T BE STOPPED

BY WILLIAM
LANGEWIESCHE



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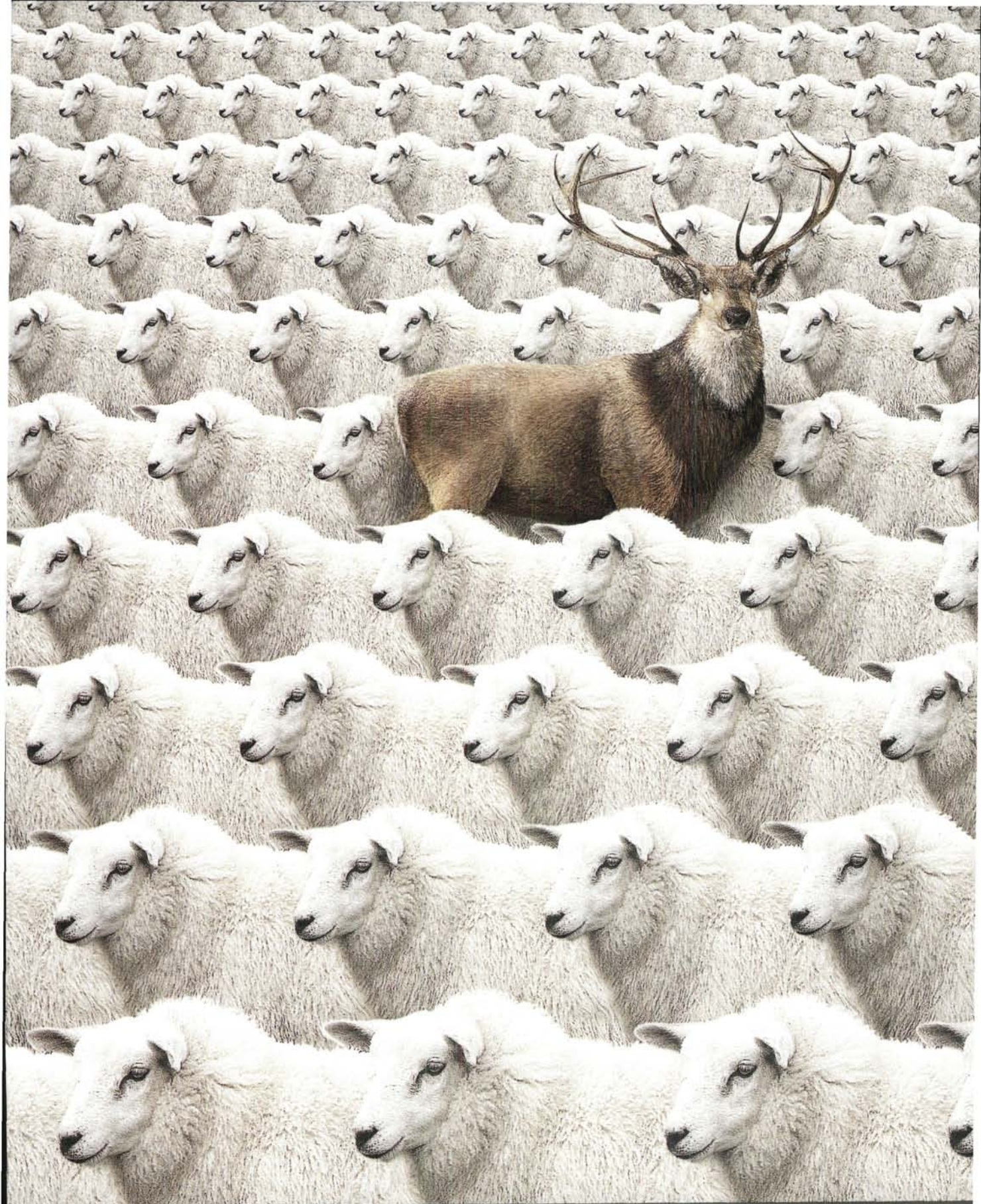
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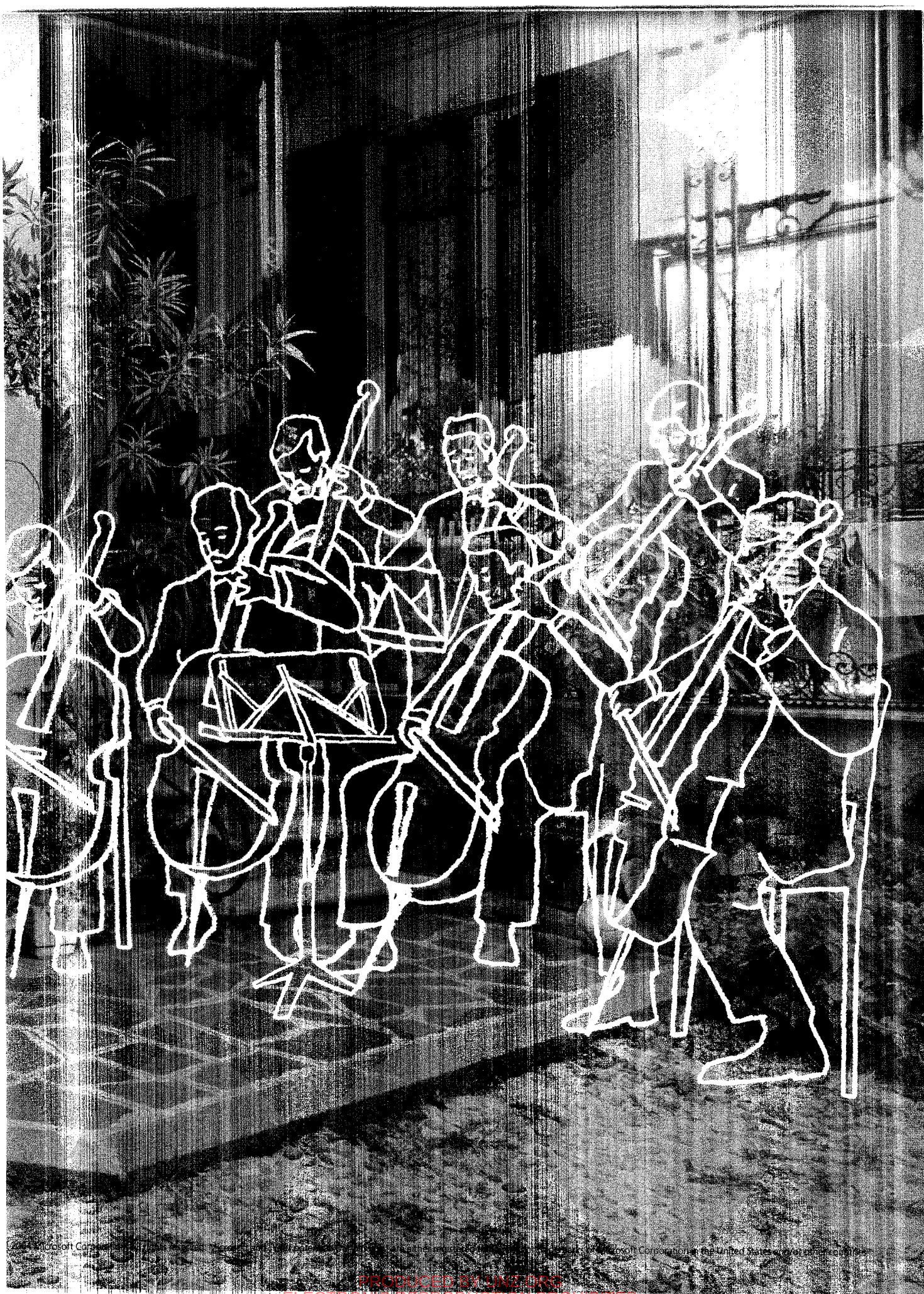
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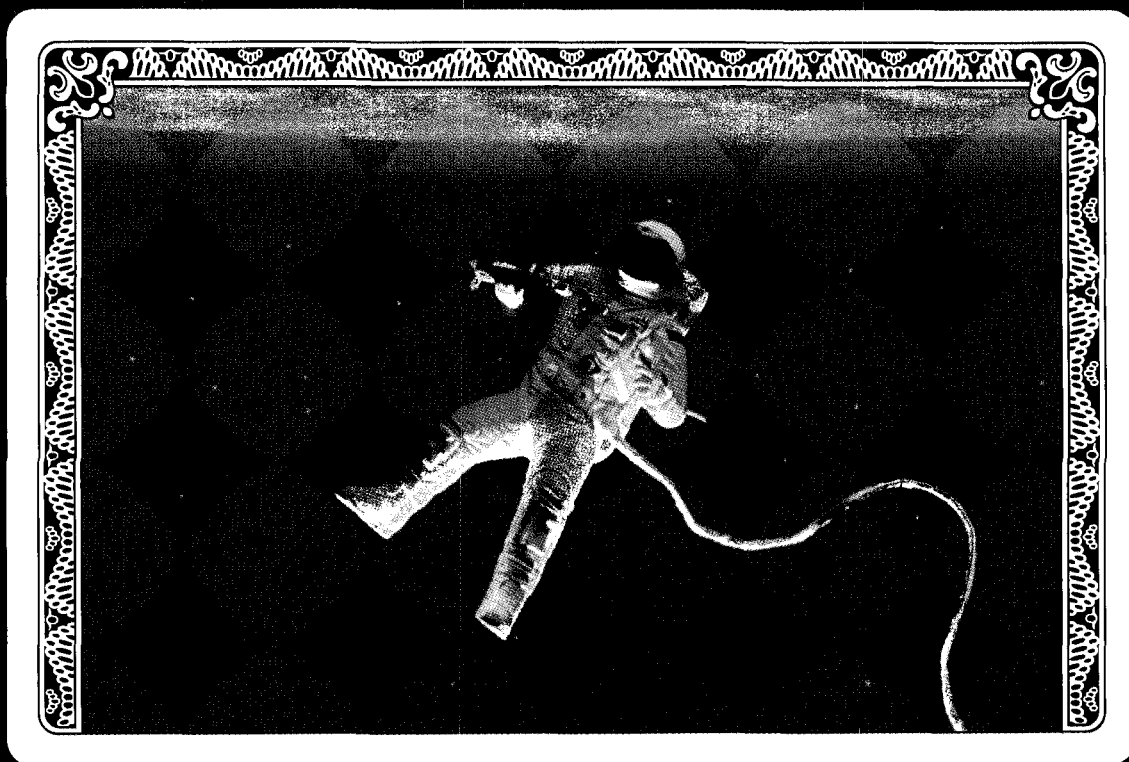
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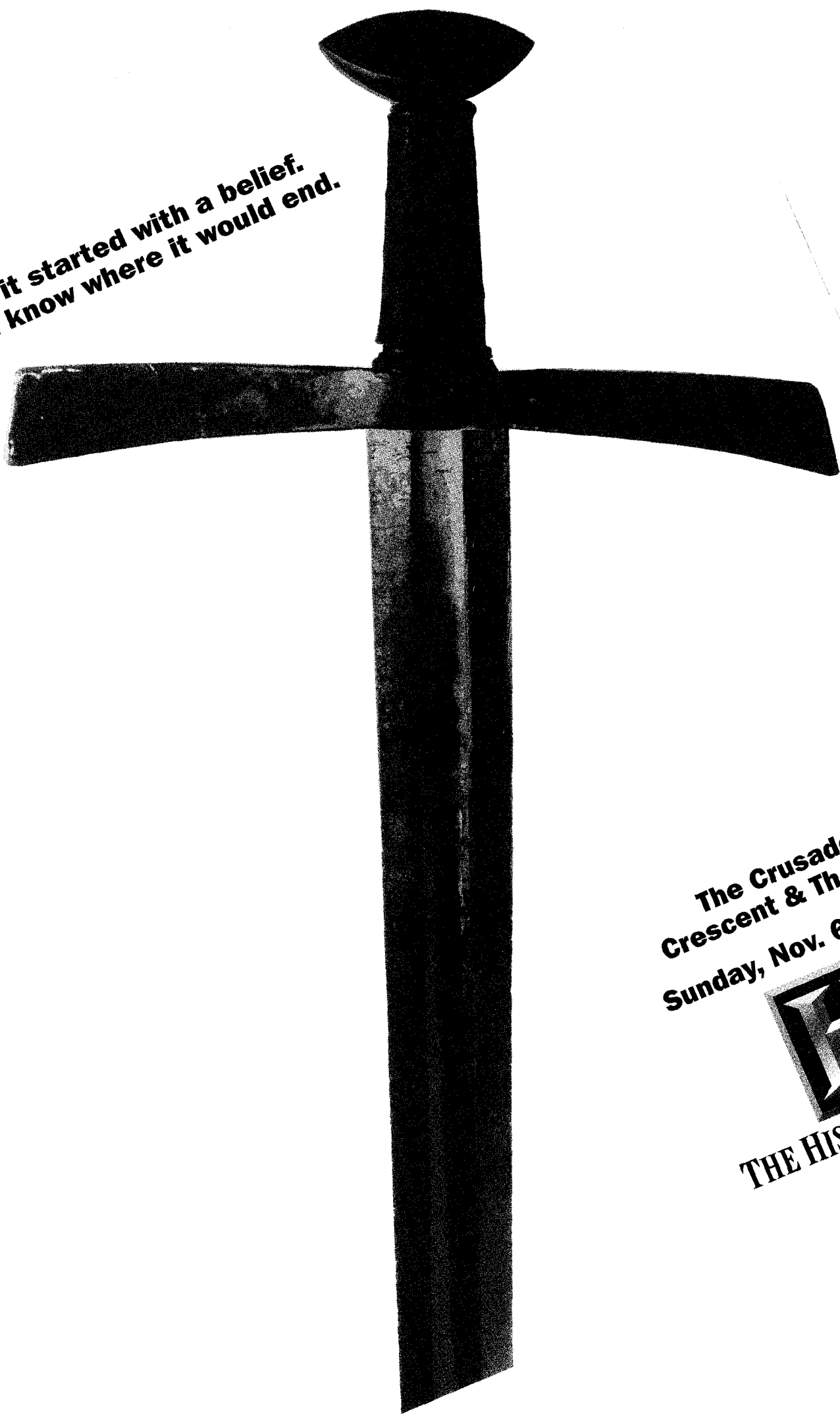
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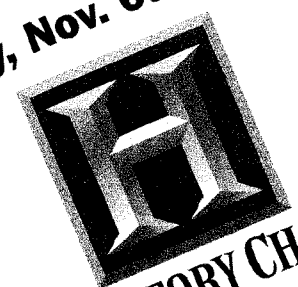
*Poetry by Tom Sleigh (page 90), Kathryn Stripling Byer (page 91),
Greg Delanty (page 98), and David Soffield (page 102)*

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**The Crusades it started with a belief.
No one could know where it would end.**



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William Langewiesche

The author of this month's cover story talks about nuclear proliferation and A. Q. Khan, the scientist who brought nuclear weapons to Pakistan.

FLASHBACKS

The Best Interests of the World

Articles by Karl Menninger, Bruno Bettelheim, Caitlin Flanagan, and others on how to raise well-adjusted children.

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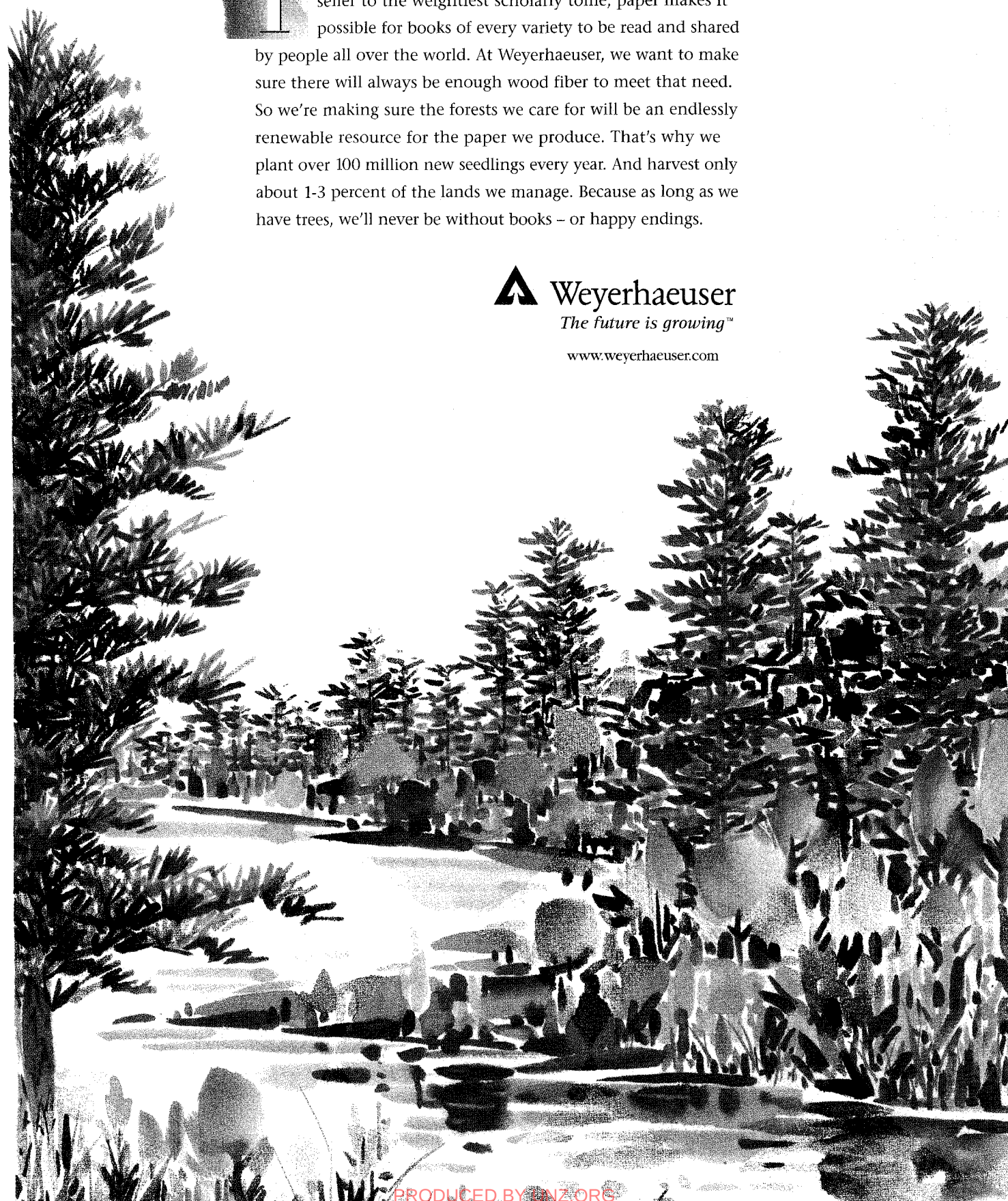
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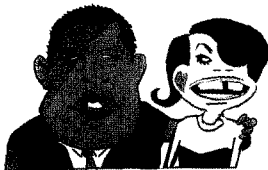
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NOVEMBER 1

Google Goes to the Library

Not content with conquering the Web, Google is slowly digitizing the library collections of the University of Michigan, Harvard, Stanford, Oxford, and the New York Public Library as well. Today, over publishers' protests, the company will begin scanning in even copyrighted material (it has given publishers the chance to opt out). Despite Google's pledge to display only snippets of copyrighted books (generally those published after 1922), many publishers want to halt the project, claiming that simply copying and storing the contents of protected works violates the law.



NOVEMBER 4

The U.S. Makes Nice With Its Neighbors

President Bush can expect a chilly reception today at the Summit of the Americas, in

Argentina, where he'll attempt to revive his languishing pro-democracy, pro-free-trade agenda in Latin America. Hugo Chavez, the president of oil-rich Venezuela, is Bush's biggest Latin American headache—a populist who has made a name for himself by bashing the United States, flirting with China and Cuba, and accusing the Bush administration of plotting his assassination or ouster. He has also suggested publicly that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice harbors an unrequited crush on him.

NOVEMBER 15

Japan Rethinks Pacifism

Today, as part of its 50th-anniversary celebrations, Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party unveils a set of amendments to the country's constitution, which has remained unchanged since U.S. forces helped draft it after World War II. The greatest controversy centers on Article 9, in which Japan revoked its sovereign right to the use of force except in self-defense. Some Japanese want to update the constitution to reflect the country's

CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

higher military profile in recent years—Japan has forces in Iraq, for instance.



But such changes would draw fire from Japanese pacifists and from neighboring countries, still wary of Japanese nationalism and mindful of atrocities committed in the 1930s.

NOVEMBER 16

Who Runs the Web?

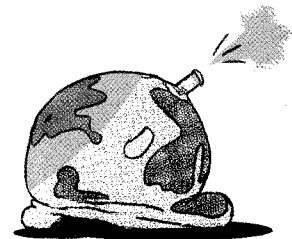
The United States does—at least for now. In the late 1990s, when it established the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the U.S. government promised that it would slowly relinquish control of the servers underlying the Internet. That hasn't happened, and in June the U.S. Department of Commerce announced that it won't. Critics of the current system have begun an effort to dislodge the United States as sole keeper of the master list of Web addresses and to give national governments sovereign control over their country-code domain names (such as .ca for Canada). Participants will try to hammer out a compromise at the UN's World Summit on the Information Society, which begins today in Tunis.

NOVEMBER 23

Atlanta's Whale of an Attraction

Bernard Marcus, co-founder of Home Depot, today christens the new Georgia Aquar-

ium—his \$200 million gift to Atlanta, the city where he started his company. (Marcus, who made billions with his giant orange do-it-yourself temples, hit upon the idea because he often spent downtime in aquariums during business trips.) The aquarium will be America's largest, with 500 million gallons of water, a coral reef, and room for 100,000 fish—including Ralph and Norton, the first whale sharks (the world's largest fish) to be displayed in this hemisphere. It could be the city's biggest economic stimulus since the 1996 Olympics; Marcus expects it to bring Atlanta \$1 billion in revenue over five years.



NOVEMBER 28

Hot Air on Greenhouse Gas?

Signatories to the Kyoto Protocol meet today in Montreal to attempt to extend the pact past its current expiration date of 2012. The United States—the world's top polluter and the only G8 member that hasn't signed the treaty—looks to be stealing Kyoto's thunder. It has established its own climate-control pact (this one more lax: it contains no specific emissions cuts) with Japan, Australia, China, India, and South Korea; the first major meeting is scheduled for this month. —MATTHEW QUIRK

NOVEMBER 8

Hasta la Vista, Gerrymandering

Californians head to the polls today in yet another special election—this one widely viewed as a referendum on the agenda of Governor Arnold



Schwarzenegger, the product of the last one. The Governor's ambitious package of ballot initiatives aims to reform state government, in part by transferring the notoriously political process of drawing lawmakers' districts (not a single seat changed hands in the last general election) to a panel of retired judges. Also on the ballot: measures to cap the state budget, limit the considerable political clout of California's public-employee unions, and make it harder for teachers to earn tenure.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Who Destroyed Palestine?

How Arafat Destroyed Palestine,” the cover headline for David Samuels’s article “In a Ruined Country” (September *Atlantic*), seemed wholly inconsistent with the text. Yes, we learn that Yasir Arafat diverted aid and business money to his private accounts and ran Palestine from “small black notebooks” carried in his vest pocket. But that is hardly unique for Third World potentates, and is particularly understandable in the chaos of modern Palestine—a fragmented, impoverished land of displaced persons. The funds were owned in theory by the Palestinian Authority, but Samuels tells us there really was no Palestinian Authority. Arafat, no organizer, could not assemble an instant government, but in his secondhand clothes and openhanded manner he was able to give hope to a poor and dispirited people. Now Arafat’s sequestered \$1 billion to \$3 billion is being returned from these foreign banks, Samuels reports.

If the question is “Who destroyed Palestine?” a string of more obvious choices leap to mind—Begin, Netanyahu, Sharon, et al., whose rapacious settlement policies have dashed any hope for even a token Palestine.

In the matter of diverted funds, a Bill Moyers piece for PBS last year suggested a poignant similarity between the total cost of the Jewish settlements in Palestine and the hundreds of billions in U.S. aid to Israel. Maybe it is the American taxpayer who unknowingly destroyed Palestine.

*James Cox
Missoula, Mont.*

It may be a sign of public ignorance, or perhaps failure of the media, that Yasir Arafat’s leaving Palestine bereft of principles, administration, and finance is considered news. Certainly the situation was plain long before his unla-

mented demise. Bill Clinton and Ehud Barak gambled that Arafat was capable of ceasing to be a thug, but alas for his constituency, Abba Eban’s witticism that the Palestinian leader never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity proved true to the very end. The Palestinians needed a Lincoln, wished perversely for a conqueror, and misplaced their faith in a vicious and self-interested Third World kleptocrat.

Yet the thesis that Arafat destroyed Palestine is questionable. Although it is unfashionable to say so, Palestinian society is backward. Why else would Arafat be lionized? It is a society that revels in victimhood, glorifies death and terror, and has been content to remain a backwater and dependency, eschewing reasonable opportunities to seek peace or become productive. The lack of countervailing pressure to construct a genuine civil society during Arafat’s undemocratic reign, and the failure of such a society to emerge subsequently, is not a symptom: it is the disease. Arafat is as much a product of his culture as its author. The pessimists are justified.

*Andrew J. Green
Overland Park, Kans.*

David Samuels’s article unfortunately creates an inaccurate impression about key facts regarding Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch & Cie, a private bank based in Geneva, Switzerland. For example, Samuels states that the Palestinian Authority’s commitment not to use its funds placed in LODH “for any war or aggression oriented activities” might “have given a more-cautious banker pause.” It was LODH, recognizing the sensitivity of the situation, that insisted on this commitment; the bank took on the PA as a client based in part on the positive environment following the Oslo Accords and the deep involvement of two former senior Israeli intelligence officers as financial advisers to the

PA. Likewise, contrary to Samuels’s statement that LODH “agreed to set up the account on the spot,” the process took months. Finally, the article inaccurately states that financial controls over the account were removed in June of 2000.

LODH would like to stress that at all times, from its initial due diligence until the closing of the subject account, it met or exceeded its legal and professional responsibilities. Given the politically sensitive nature of the engagement, LODH took special care in vetting, maintaining, and ultimately terminating the relationship. LODH made tough decisions both to open the relationship in the optimistic period that followed the conclusion of the Oslo agreements and to terminate it during the second intifada. Although the current state of affairs in the Middle East is extremely unfortunate, any suggestion that LODH acted without due diligence is false.

If Samuels had contacted us before finishing his article, it would have afforded us the opportunity to correct these inaccurate statements.

*Jérôme Koechlin
Head of Corporate Communications
Lombard Odier Darier Hentsch & Cie
Geneva, Switzerland*

Will David Samuels accept a small correction? Munib al-Masri—now the richest man in Palestine—was employed by Phillips in Algiers and also in Beirut, but he was not “the head of Phillips Petroleum operations in Algeria.” My father, who spent his entire career with Phillips and was head of its Egypt operations from 1963 until 1970, says that al-Masri, who would have been twenty-nine in 1963, would have reported to Silvio Èha, who was the man in charge. Whether the promotion was Samuels’s error or an exaggeration of al-Masri’s, a fact’s a fact.

*Cynthia Beck Croasdaile
Greenwood Village, Colo.*

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In his fascinating portrayal of the late Palestinian leader, David Samuels indirectly presents an important question. If it is true, as the “official Palestinian Authority committee” concluded, that 43 percent of the “state budget” was embezzled and only 9.5 percent of it was actually spent on the needs of the Palestinian people, were U.S. and European officials aware of this situation? If so, what did they do in response? If not, why not? Should they be held accountable in some manner?

Ethan S. Burger
Washington College of Law
American University
Washington, D.C.

David Samuels hit the nail on the head. As he notes, Arafat’s successor, Mahmoud Abbas, recently built a four-story mansion on land intended to be a public park. Clearly, Arafat’s legacy of corruption and dishonesty continues.

Abbas’s official television stations continue to broadcast extreme incitement, even as Abbas tells the United States that has stopped. Many of the recent would-be suicide bombers (whose capture goes unreported in the United States) belong not to Hamas but to Fatah, Abbas’s own movement. Abbas could easily have pursued the small and violent group Islamic Jihad, but he refused to confront it—let alone the larger Hamas.

On political issues Abbas has stuck to Arafat’s hard-line positions. He demands that descendants of Arab refugees be resettled in pre-1967 Israel, not the West Bank (Israel suggested the latter). He rejects the rights of the millions of Mizrahi Jewish Israelis, who are descendants of a similar number of Jewish refugees from Arab lands. In demanding that pre-1967 Israel absorb both Jewish refugees from Arab lands and Arab refugees caused by the Arab wars against Israel, he clearly rejects a two-state solution.

It will take decades to undo the legacy of indoctrination started by Arafat. The steps taken by Abbas so far are not encouraging.

D. Lubinsky
Atlanta, Ga.

David Samuels replies:

The interviews I conducted in Israel and Palestine, and the extensive documentation I have seen, all suggest that Lombard Odier embraced the proposal to accept Arafat’s money during an initial meeting with Ozrad Lev in Geneva in early 1997. The “due diligence” that followed that meeting seems to have consisted of a few meetings in Switzerland during which the structure of the account was hashed out and a subsequent trip by the banker Richard de Tschanner to Ramallah (where he was wined and dined by Rachid and was given a model of the al-Aqsa mosque as a gift by Arafat). In a formal letter to Lombard Odier dated June 2000, Rachid instructed the bank to remove the financial controls that Lev had insisted on—including the stipulation that funds from the account could be withdrawn only to a heavily monitored Palestinian Authority account in Ramallah.

It is easy to understand why, after four years of violence and thousands dead, the Swiss bankers who handled Arafat’s money are so eager to assert that the bank “met or exceeded its legal and professional responsibilities.” I doubt that the people of Palestine, whose money wound up in Switzerland, or the people of Israel, who suffered the effects of the brutal terror war that Arafat helped finance and direct, would approve of Lombard Odier’s code of professional ethics. Obtaining a letter from a client promising not to engage in “war or aggression oriented activities” would qualify as a reasonable precaution against such activities only in fairyland. Surely a reasonable person might be led to wonder why a bank would do business with a client from whom such a letter was judged necessary. The suggestion that the bank’s decision to accept Arafat’s money was a noble deed undertaken in the optimistic spirit of the Oslo Accords beggars belief.

Mr. al-Masri is a gracious man who did his best to communicate with me for four hours in a mixture of English and Arabic. Any errors that crept into my shorthand version of his résumé are my responsibility.

Mitt Romney

By virtue of his very own “New Hampshire advantage”—high name recognition and favorability ratings in the Granite State’s southern half—Mitt

Romney (“The Holy Cow! Candidate,” September *Atlantic*) is a more likely Republican nominee for president than most Massachusetts Democrats would have you believe. But even those who recognize his potential understand that his candidacy is likely to be derailed by two concerns, neither of which Sridhar Pappu addresses in his largely flattering profile.

The first is Romney’s “evolving” position on abortion. As Pappu notes, Romney—having learned from his father’s experience—has taken to being “very, very careful” in his choice of words. Yet in 1994, while campaigning against Ted Kennedy, Romney argued that abortion should be “safe and legal in this country.” Though Pappu gives Romney a pass on his past statement, conservative activists are unlikely to do so.

The second is Romney’s lack of foreign-policy experience. Simply put, save working with the Utah Public Safety Command during the 2002 Olympics, Romney has none. After 9/11 Republican primary voters may not be willing to elect a commander in chief with less practice in international affairs than Howard Dean.

Yoni Cohen
Washington, D.C.

I read with amusement that Mitt Romney, asked how he would prevent the death penalty from being imposed on an innocent person, replied, “By having a higher standard of care—something beyond ‘reasonable doubt.’ It should be clear and convincing evidence.” I note that he went to Harvard Law School in the early 1970s, so perhaps he can be forgiven for misquoting the law he learned so long ago.

As any second-year law student can tell you, the standard of proof in a typical civil case is “preponderance” (51 percent) of the evidence. In a more complicated civil case it is “clear and convincing” evidence—think of the *Exxon Valdez* disaster. The standard of proof for guilt in a criminal case is significantly higher: “beyond a reasonable doubt.” In other words, if the evidence in a criminal trial were no greater than “clear and convincing,” a jury would be directed to return a “not guilty” verdict.



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Romney bent over backward to point out that he learned from his father the importance of being careful what you say. If his standard of “clear and convincing” evidence were actually the rule in death-penalty cases, we’d be executing nearly every person convicted of murder. I don’t think his dad would have approved.

*David Ross
Long Beach, Calif.*

Sridhar Pappu says that Governor Romney makes policy decisions based on data, but he fails to note that Romney does so selectively. In the most recent Massachusetts budget sessions Romney eliminated funds for the Department of Education’s Safe Schools program, which involves anti-suicide and anti-violence initiatives to protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered teens. His budget vetoes do not reflect scientific data: although teenage suicide rates have decreased nationally, the scientific community has established that GLBT youth remain at greater risk for both suicide and violence. Perhaps Romney wishes to rein in spending (this line item amounted to 0.0014 percent of the approximately \$22 billion budget), but this veto suggests that he either uses or ignores data to suit his political agenda.

Romney also eliminated language from the DOE’s budget—language that had been included for years—that codified recommendations from the state’s board of education on the safety of GLBT students. This particular political maneuver, one of many meanspirited actions by the governor, stands in sharp contrast to Romney’s sincere use of words like “gosh” and “neat.”

*Tony L. Baptista
Phoenix, Ariz.*

In the final section of his article on Mitt Romney, Sridhar Pappu asked the governor about his LDS temple garments and characterized himself as “uncomfortably” posing the question.

Of course he was uncomfortable. That’s what happens when you ask something grossly inappropriate and then publish it in a national forum.

*Sarah Parker-Allen
Pickerington, Ohio*

BHL

I was almost enjoying Bernard-Henri Lévy’s rather meanspirited observations on American life (“In the Footsteps of Tocqueville,” July/August *Atlantic*) until I came to his discourse on “creationism.” As a former anthropology teacher, I’ve been following the debate over the teaching of evolution for some time. Despite his erudition, Lévy goes seriously off course when he smears the biologist Jonathan Wells as part of a Moonie conspiracy against evolution. And he wrongly lumps together all critics of Darwin as religious crackpots who use pseudo-science to recalculate the age of the earth and deny the fossil record.

Rather than engage in religion-baiting, I suggest that Lévy actually read Dr. Wells’s book, *The Icons of Evolution* (2000), which takes a revealing look at the strengths and weaknesses in the Darwinian view of evolution—and reveals how the weak points in the theory are routinely ignored by many textbooks. Copiously documented with citations to the primary scientific literature, Wells’s book has been vindicated on many of its points, and grudging corrections have had to be made to a number of textbooks.

The neo-Darwinist version of evolution (random genetic mutation and natural selection) is currently accepted by most biologists, but it is not a scientific slam-dunk. Unfortunately, it is defended by many scientists with a sanctimonious dogmatism worthy of the medieval clerics who persecuted Galileo. And the scientifically uninformed predictably frame the debate as one of bubble-headed Bible-belt fundamentalists versus the educated, the rational, and the sane. In fact, the unsolved mysteries surrounding the origin and evolution of life should intrigue and humble us all—including Lévy.

*Clark McCann
Bellevue, Wash.*

I began Lévy’s Tocqueville odyssey with much interest and hope. My interest was in how a European would interpret and present today’s American culture; my hope was that he could do it without reflecting too many of his own biases.

Those biases, I'm afraid, are making these otherwise well-written accounts increasingly hard to read. Nowhere is Lévy more difficult to read than when he takes on the interpretation of evangelical Christian thought and values. From his condescending account of his Willow Creek church experience (*May Atlantic*) to his editorializing on creationism, Lévy is incredibly subjective and even small-minded. His notion that those who believe God may have played a part, along with evolution, in producing the world we see around us are part of "the subtlest, most underhanded, most cunning, and at bottom most dangerous ideological maneuver ... in years" would be humorous if he were not serious. Does he truly believe that some kind of conspiracy is involved here?

What finally tipped my exasperation over the edge was his editorializing on what he describes as American society's "profound evolution in the direction of the extreme right, definitively turning its back on its European heritage."

Where has Lévy been getting his information? Does he know that the members of this so-called extreme right, by which he must mean evangelical Christians, are the very ones who man and fund many of the large humanitarian efforts in this world? A brief reading of history will also tell him that evangelicals were (and still are today) among those who fought the hardest against slavery, religious intolerance, and the abuse of women's rights worldwide.

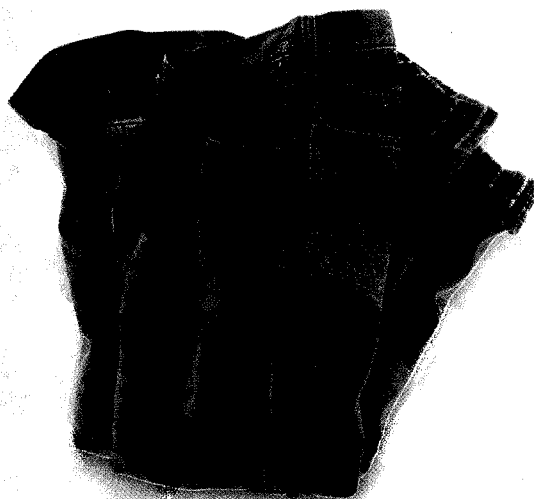
Lévy should be informed enough to know that there are millions of evangelical Christians around the world, most of whom have the same values and beliefs as those in America. To classify all of them as somehow "extremist" is, to say the least, sadly short of open-minded investigation and interpretation.

Marvin Croswell
Duncan, B.C.

As an incarcerated reader conversant with Bernard-Henri Lévy (I read his *Barbarism With a Human Face* during my first term, in the late 1970s, and saw the feature on him in *Vanité Fair* a couple of years ago), I'm writing to dispute his points about the differences between private and public prisons (July/August

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THE Atlantic

Atlantic). Many of the observations he made about what happened to be a corporate-owned prison could have applied to any state-owned prison as well.

What inspired my writing most of all was the irony that unions are much more powerful in France than they are in the United States; but the growth of the “prison-industrial complex” has allowed guards’ unions to become powerful enough to control policy. Certainly in California, which has the largest individual state prison system in the United States, the union has caused amenities to be added and then removed as suits it. It also spearheaded the “rehabilitation doesn’t work; it is all about the victims” mentality, which created a “three strikes” law that was almost defeated last year—until Arnold Schwarzenegger, who claimed he would stand up to the guards, reneged. In quieter fashion Schwarzenegger has already stopped paroling long-overdue lifers and resumed reincarcerating parole violators for minor technical violations.

My point being: the standout thing about America’s current penal system is that it provides a false economic baffle of jobs, and that the politics of being “tough on crime” have now led to the guards’ having so much power that policy change seems to be impossible even after the media shine the spotlight on all the waste of money and lives. I still appreciate Lévy’s writing about prisons as if they mattered, but to your average American—even your average *Atlantic* reader—I’d have to say they demonstrably don’t.

Shane Williams

Metropolitan Detention Center
Los Angeles, Calif.

Bear-Baiting

In his review of *Animal Rights and Animals in Translation* (“If Pigs Could Swim,” September *Atlantic*), B. R. Myers comments on baiting bears in Maine, a practice he describes as “shooting them at close range, frequently in the back.” While that’s certainly true, and is best described as ambushing rather than hunting, baiting has some other dire consequences as well.

Maine’s bear-feeding program, sanctioned by the state’s Department

of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, is designed to produce more bears for out-of-state hunters, who killed 70 percent of bears taken in 2004—86 percent of them over bait. The task is made a bit easier for them because the state allows bait—stale jelly doughnuts and used cooking grease, among other delectables—to be placed thirty days before the beginning of the season, to lull the animals into a false sense of security. The result reduces a sport to a shooting gallery. This approach to game management also increases the possibility of disease transmission among bears and other animals that feed at bait sites; and it increases reproductive rates and “trains” thousands of bears to rely on human food.

So why does Maine—which also retains the dubious distinction of being the only state to allow bear trapping—condone this practice? It’s not science or sportsmanship; it’s economics. In addition to the revenue generated by hefty nonresident hunting licenses, the department’s 2004 management report points out that out-of-state bear hunters frequently employ guides for large fees.

Ironically, the report also states, “Never feed bears under any circumstances.” Maine’s wildlife agency should follow its own advice.

Don Loprieno
Wildlife Alliance of Maine
Bristol, Maine

B. R. Myers trots out the same old line one often hears from those who do not actually know any hunters: that they are just in it for the kill. Although his characterization may be true for some, I can assure him that the vast majority of the 25 million Americans who enjoy hunting do so for many different reasons, the thrill of killing not usually among them. Myers asserts that bears are often shot in the back. While I’m not sure I understand why that is objectionable, no sound hunter would shoot a bear in the back unless there was no other choice. A bear, like most other animals, is most effectively and humanely killed by a shot to the vital organs. A bear’s thick hide, large spine, and larger rib cage make the back a very poor choice.

Robert Hancock
Birmingham, Ala.

B. R. Myers’s blanket condemnation of hunters is simplistic. Some hunters take pleasure in killing, but for every anecdote Myers recounts about the “thrill of the kill,” I can find a thoughtful hunter for whom hunting is an expression of the unavoidable way in which our lives are lived at the expense of wild animals. This intertwining of life and death is just as true for vegans as it is for hunters.

Although Myers is right that animals “are treated worse here [than in Europe] because we hardly think of them at all,” this does not go far enough. The increasing cruelty of our industrial animal-production factories is the result of relentless commodification: animals have been turned into “production units.” Part of our refusal to deal with the cruelty of this progressive and unending process comes from the assumption that markets produce rational results, with an almost invisible semantic slide from what is economically rational to what is moral. Nothing about this assumption is conservative. It is corporatist and consumerist, two sides of a pact with the devil.

J. Claude Evans

Associate Professor of Philosophy and
Environmental Studies
Washington University
St. Louis, Mo.

B. R. Myers’s ignorance of hunting is absolutely breathtaking, as is his statement “It is obvious that the real attraction of these ‘sports’ is the thrill of the kill.” I grew up in an upper-middle-class family in which no one hunted; I didn’t go redneck until my early thirties. Now I am a passionate bow hunter for white-tailed deer, which means I see at least twenty deer for every one I could have any possibility of shooting. I have hunted in Adirondack deer camps with men who spend all year waiting for the season. When it finally arrives, they leave the easy deer hunting on the farms all around them in the lowlands and journey up to a cabin in the High Peaks region, where the deer density is only a tenth as great. They are looking for the most difficult deer they can find: old, skittish, spooky mountain bucks that you would never see in daylight at all were

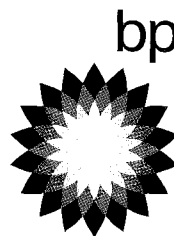
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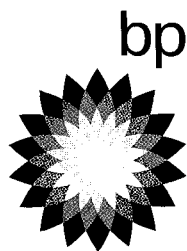


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it not for the rut causing them—possibly—to let down their guard the tiniest bit as they search for does. Deer hunters like me will walk fourteen miles a day over rough terrain and count themselves lucky to get one shot every year or two. Don't tell me they're in it for the thrill of the kill. It goes deeper than that, all the way to the bone. Sure, some hunters are slobs. So are some journalists.

*Bill Heavey
Arlington, Va.*

In his concluding paragraph B. R. Myers chides, "So it is that we now lag behind even the Spanish in animal welfare; and when the Turks get into the EU, we will lag behind a Muslim nation as well." The implication, of course, is that Muslims are morally and ethically inferior to Americans in general; that the United States should be ashamed not to meet the animal-protection standards in countries such as Turkey, Jordan, and Indonesia. In fact, the Islamic tradition sets very strict standards both for the care of animals and for their slaughter. This tradition calls for calming the animal before slaughter and shielding other livestock from the sights and sounds. Moreover, throughout the Muslim world factory farms have begun to take hold of the livestock industry only recently—owing to initiatives by USAID and other international aid agencies that serve the interests of corporate partners. Within the United States itself, Muslim Americans are organizing with interfaith groups to provide alternatives to factory farms. In doing so they hope to support the rights not only of animals but also of local farmers and farm workers who have become the prey of giant corporations. One can only hope that Myers might consider Muslims' own anguish over the greed and corruption rampant in the food industry, rather than ignorantly assuming their ethical backwardness.

*Ian Straughn
Interim President, TAQWA EcoFoods NFP
Chicago, Ill.*

It is refreshing to see an article that speaks so honestly about the plight of animals in this country and shows appreciation for the fact that all animals,

both human and non-human, are to be respected for our different strengths, weaknesses, and forms of intelligence. Thank you for choosing to publish it.

Karen Tracey
Grand Rapids, Mich.

B. R. Myers replies:

Robert Hancock and Bill Heavey both claim that people hunt for reasons other than bloodlust, but neither can name any; Heavey's letter simply describes the lengths to which men will go for the thrill of killing a particularly "difficult" animal. Hancock explains that the "sound" hunter would not shoot a bear in the back because doing so is inhumane and ineffective. Since Hancock does not deny that bears are often shot in the back anyway—nor does he even understand why the cruelty is objectionable—his remarks only show how far the "sound" hunter is from the rule.

As for J. Claude Evans's letter, the notion that people kill wildlife to make a philosophical statement about the "intertwining" of life and death will probably elicit the same amused reaction from Hancock and Heavey that it did from me. Ian Straughn somehow contrived to miss the whole point of my article, which is that we Americans are not as humane as those foreigners whom we consider particularly cruel to animals. My remark about Turkey tied in with a mocking reference earlier in the piece to press reports of GIs' rescuing dogs from "mean Islamic streets," reports that implied—wrongly, as I made clear—that animals are better off in America.

But I think all these letter writers will agree that the American farm animal in its walled-in hell would be happy to change places with a wild bear, even one unfortunate enough to live in Maine.

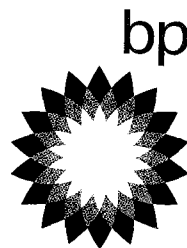
The Great Escape

In her review of *Unraveled* ("The Great Escape," September *Atlantic*), Sandra Tsing Loh wonders "how much insight the former *Interview* editor Mark Matousek can claim to have into mothers everywhere, as he is famously gay."

Not only does her statement do a disservice to gay parents, but it is also sexist. Why assume that gender, sexual orientation, or status as a procreator precludes insight into parenting? After

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all, what mature adult doesn't know and appreciate the sacrifices his or her parents made? Gay or straight, what manipulative daddy's girl or damaged mama's boy doesn't have a handle on what makes that parent tick?

The term "famously gay" reinforces a truism in our society: the only thing worse than being homosexual is to be gay and not be ashamed.

Jonathan Newell
Garner, N.C.

Though I typically enjoy Sandra Tsing Loh's witty and refreshingly self-deprecating pieces on the trials and tribulations of upper-middle-class contemporary motherhood, I was disappointed with "The Great Escape." In particular, I take issue with the portrayal of Tolstoy's Anna Karenina in the cheeky discussion of what Loh terms absentee motherhood.

While Loh clearly grasps the fatuousness of the actress Megan Mullally's remarks on Anna's inability to procure Paxil, she falls far short of providing an intelligent and plausible reading of the text and the reasons for its widespread and lasting appeal. The Oprah minions have ironically adopted the novel and its protagonist as an argument for what Tolstoy—an outspoken proponent of marriage, who argued that a woman's unique and foremost obligation was to her children—would surely have deemed morally scurrilous. This reading of Tolstoy—myopic and entirely untenable when considered in light of the author's canon, biography, and known views, not to mention generally accepted criticism of his works—should be condemned among educated, literate women as the antithesis of all things empowering. If liberation necessitates as specious justification such a dilettantish, herdlike misreading of a text renowned for its painfully eloquent argument in favor of moral and religious self-discipline, perhaps we are doing something wrong.

In three years spent working toward a degree in Russian language and literature I have been consistently baffled as to why so many female readers (myself included) are enamored of a writer overtly on the unpopular side of the "woman question" (see his foreword to

Chekhov's short story "The Darling" for a quick bit of proof). I can only suppose that we recognize in Tolstoy an uncanny command of female sensibilities and the conflicts women endure, and simply choose to disregard his often unflattering conclusions as to the roads we take.

Jeanne-Marie Jackson
Madison, N.J.

To hear Sandra Tsing Loh tell it, abandoning your children is the next great leap of feminism. Actually, women who leave their families merely lower themselves to the level of absent fathers. My ex-wife left our three kids for some guy she met on the Internet three years ago. She quit her job, took her retirement money, left the state, and pays \$150 a month in child support. I fail to see what Oprah's Book Club, *Anna Karenina*, *Shirley Valentine*, or starched or stuffed shirts have to do with running out on your kids. This ultimate act of narcissistic self-actualization and cowardice does nothing for men or women. It just punishes the children, who did nothing wrong but are left to wonder if they did.

Dave Hippo
Puyallup, Wash.

Sandra Tsing Loh replies:

In suggesting that Mark Matousek is not the most natural expert on what mothering feels like, I didn't intend to tread on the rights of any persons, including Matousek, gay parents, or men in general. I merely meant that the most natural experts are mothers themselves.

Now to the Russian language and literature problem, which sadly we do not have a Tolstoy novel's length of space to discuss. Short version: Oprah had always wanted to tackle Anna, feared length. Oprah's eventual conclusion: Long book, big tragedy, sad woman. Anna Karenina—juicy read, hard to see as story of female liberation, because of train. Are we actually in disagreement? Oprah's personal triumph was that she finished the book. Manilow's was his making a new twist on "Copacabana." Not a pretty culture, perhaps, but it's ours.

Finally, to Dave Hippo, I am truly sorry. What a tragedy. That is perhaps one thing on which an unashamed gay man, a baffled Tolstoy scholar, and I could all agree.

Without Precedent

Itake issue with the suggestions embedded in the articles by Stuart Taylor Jr. ("Remote Control," September *Atlantic*) and Benjamin Wittes ("Without Precedent," September *Atlantic*) that term limits be considered for members of the Supreme Court. Alexander Hamilton would certainly object to a rotating bench, if the goal is to remedy the lack of experience on the Court. What's more, giving greater control to the president and the Senate would only work to undermine judicial independence.

A political problem of this nature requires deference to the Constitution, not amendments. And if ambiguity in the law is the problem, perhaps we ought to look to legislatures, which seem to eschew concrete lawmaking whenever possible.

The influence of the Court has expanded, to be sure, but its growth has hardly matched that of the other branches. The greatest problem with the current Court is its inability to do its job, which is protecting the rights of citizens.

Steven Michels
Assistant Professor of Political Science
Sacred Heart University
Fairfield, Conn.

As a law teacher for twenty-seven years and an occasional appellate litigator, I share Benjamin Wittes's view that it is difficult to teach the holdings in particular cases when the courts so often fail to honestly and objectively describe the facts and apply precedent. According to Justice Antonin Scalia, for example, Justice Thomas does not even believe in *stare decisis*, or the obligation to follow precedent. *Bush v. Gore*, perhaps the most prominent of the Supreme Court's recent opinions, was judicial activism in its purest form.

But the real problem is not the Supreme Court, where it is unlikely that a misleading description of law or facts will escape scrutiny from a dissenting justice. The real problem is in the federal appellate courts, where judicial appointees have been ideologically litmus-tested by conservatives and in

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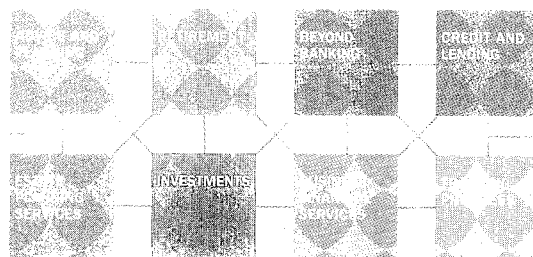
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some cases appear to regard their roles as lieutenants in an ongoing political and cultural war.

Wittes recommends that judges on the lower federal courts publicly criticize Supreme Court holdings. Just what we need—increased activism, division, and judicial anarchy. I can't defend the current Court with great enthusiasm—and Stuart Taylor Jr.'s preceding article on the relative experiential cluelessness of the justices seems right on the mark—but the subheading accusing the Court of “arrogance, dishonesty, grandiosity, and a lack of respect for principle, history, or logic” is plainly more applicable to the current leaders of the executive and legislative branches.

James F. Ponsoldt
Professor of Law
University of Georgia
Athens, Ga.

Stuart Taylor Jr. is incorrect that only one justice, David Souter, has presided over a trial. The late chief justice William Rehnquist asked to be assigned to a trial, and presided over it, a couple of years ago—expressly because he wanted to learn more about trial practice.

Dilan Esper
Los Angeles, Calif.

In “Without Precedent,” Benjamin Wittes makes a number of valid points about the usurpations that are routinely passed off as legitimate decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court. However, the idea that all members of the Court are guilty of sloppy, result-driven jurisprudence is wrong. As practitioners of the doctrine of original understanding, Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas vigorously dissent from the make-it-up-as-you-go-along decisions that display the problems Wittes ably identifies. For example, Scalia's dissent in the 1992 abortion case *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* is a brilliant critique of this judicial arrogance.

Moreover, Judge Richard Posner's criticism that none of the current justices is “a John Marshall, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Louis Brandeis, or Robert Jackson in depth of insight or ... breadth of experience” fails to recognize that Scalia surpasses the overrated Holmes and

the very overrated Brandeis in commitment to principle, analytical rigor, and rhetorical skill.

The Court is a corrupting force in our government, but not all the justices contribute to this arrangement.

Gregory J. Sullivan
Hamilton, N.J.

Stuart Taylor Jr. replies:

Dilan Esper is correct, except it was in 1984, before Justice Rehnquist became chief justice, that he slipped quietly out of Washington to preside over a two-day civil-rights trial in Richmond, Virginia. At his own initiative, Rehnquist sat specially as a U.S. District Court judge, a common practice in the early days of the Republic which had become virtually unheard-of in the twentieth century. I also erred in overlooking the fact that Rehnquist and Justice Anthony Kennedy did some criminal-defense work when they were in private practice, more than thirty years ago. I regret these errors.

Shopping for Sperm

While I admire and applaud Lori Gottlieb and other members of Single Mothers by Choice (“The XY Files,” September *Atlantic*), I had to smile when I read about the hand-wringing that accompanied their decisions about which sperm donors should father their children. After I became pregnant (the old-fashioned way) with our first child, and my husband and I began to examine in earnest the gene pool on both sides of our family, we looked at each other and said, “Yikes!” Today we have two wonderful, healthy children, and although they are like my husband and me in some ways, in most ways they are like no one but themselves. Sometimes we can see where a characteristic came from (“Just like Aunt Doris!”); at other times its source is a mystery. Whenever one of our children displays a trait that baffles us, my husband mutters to me, “Not exactly what I ordered.” I have to believe the same will be true for Gottlieb and the other members of SMC, no matter how carefully they select their children's fathers.

Kathryn Dailey
Danville, Ind.

Lori Gottlieb claims that she and her like-minded friends were “idealistic.” I think “goal-oriented” is the more honest description of women who hope to find a laundry list of items in “half a cubic centimeter of defrosted sperm.” All through the article one finds rationalizations for what is essentially a selfish, shortsighted act.

I, too, am a single mother, although I confess to having taken a more starry-eyed approach to conception: I knew the father for some time beforehand. I freely admit that all purposeful child-bearing is at least partially a selfish thing; no parent of either sex can pretend that there isn't some ego involved. But think of the already considerable risks and sorrows that inevitably affect our children at least as much as they affect us. To add to them by choosing a gene partner in this way is just plain irresponsible.

Eileen Fay
Kingston, N.Y.

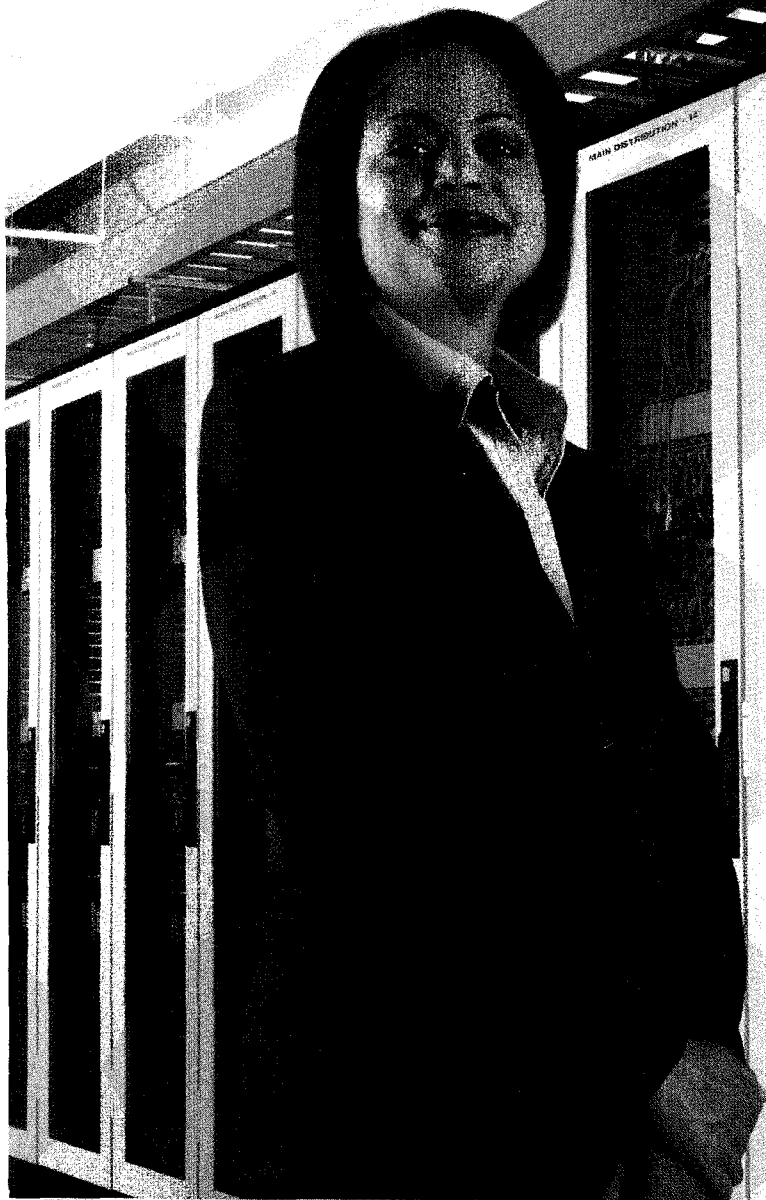
I was fascinated by Lori Gottlieb's story: by the practicality of her reasoning (buy discount toilet paper but not discount sperm), by the effort to make something romantic out of a medical procedure, and by her rosy vision of a future when, responsible for a child whose father she knows only as a number, she will meet—and marry—her soul mate.

And then I got angry, for surely we have lost our way.

Of course it's good to have options. Not so long ago women, even in the Western world, were severely restricted in their actions and activities, vilified if they had a child “out of wedlock,” often rushed into marriage with an unwilling partner. Marriage was for life, divorce being rare, difficult, and expensive. A “divorcée” was not accepted in polite circles.

But too much choice presents us with a paradox. The more choices we have, the less satisfied we become. Nowadays if our marriage doesn't turn out exactly as we'd hoped, we can divorce and try again with someone else—perhaps someone who can “fathom [our] soul.” And if we don't want to be tied to just one partner, we can have serial

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lovers, cohabitation now being socially acceptable. And single motherhood is "a choice"—at least for those women with incomes sufficient to support a family and all the "caretakers" they must employ if they are to maintain their position as breadwinners.

One must ask, too, if men's role as marriage partners and fathers is gradually being eroded. In my research as a sociologist I speak with many women who are so involved with their careers that they don't have time for a serious, committed relationship, or who have such unrealistic expectations of marriage that no man could meet them. As a woman who likes men, I can't help thinking they are being reduced to "side dishes"—tasty additions to life, but not the real meal. Side dishes and suppliers of sperm.

Monica B. Morris
Los Angeles, Calif.

Speaking as a father in my mid-thirties, I must take issue with Lori Gottlieb. Her entire article is based on the erroneous assumption that it is okay for a child to grow up without a father—that men are somehow optional in the rearing of children. The majority of social opinion appears to be to the contrary, as evidenced by the amount of time and effort state governments have spent enacting "deadbeat dad" laws in an attempt to force men to take more responsibility for their offspring.

Furthermore, Gottlieb's inability to find Mr. Right is difficult for me to believe. I know countless men who are both kind and loving husbands and kind and loving fathers. Perhaps it is not that the men around her are lacking but, rather, that her own huge ego keeps getting in the way. Gottlieb does an excellent job of defining an entire subculture of women in America today who are so self-important that no man will ever be good enough for them. If they cannot set their egos aside long enough to settle down and get married, how do they expect to raise a child—arguably the most selfless act most adults undertake—by themselves?

And while Gottlieb worries about what to say to her child if she has a daughter, what of all the baby boys con-

ceived with donor sperm? What do their mothers tell them? Sadly, the message being handed down to this next generation of sperm donors is that fatherhood is little more than a biological act without social or emotional consequence.

Matthew D. Taylor
Rockville, Md.

Lori Gottlieb's article was a terrific read. As a married father of two, I offer some free advice. If Gottlieb thinks it's "bad form" to mention her donor's identification number, wait until she finds a good and dependable babysitter. If someone asks her for that individual's name, mentioning it will be *really* bad form.

W. Charles Bailey Jr.
Baltimore, Md.

Lori Gottlieb replies:

I agree with Kathryn Dailey. Now that I'm pregnant, I realize how useless the process of shopping for specific traits was. Besides, even if my baby emerges with all the recessive traits I never thought I (or my donor) carried, I'm already too in love with him or her to care.

It's surprising that Eileen Fay, a single mother by choice, takes issue with women who make the same choice but use a different method of conception. There is simply no evidence that a child is better off if the donor is known rather than anonymous (in fact, in many cases children are heartbroken by the abandonment of a known donor). I wonder if she would similarly label "irresponsible" infertile couples who use an anonymous sperm donor instead of a family friend's sperm in order to have a family.

I am confused by Monica Morris's implication that women like me are reducing men to "suppliers of sperm." On the contrary, we love and respect men enough to treat them as individuals. If we thought all men were interchangeable for this purpose, we would have simply married one.

I don't believe, as Matthew Taylor contends, that I'm sending my child the message that fatherhood is irrelevant. The message of my story is that life involves tough compromises, and this seemed to be the best option for both me and my child. Given that nearly a third of all families in this country are headed by single par-

ents, does Taylor believe that people who divorce are selfish and egotistical too? That raising children in a tension-filled household or shuttling them back and forth between homes is better than raising them as a single, stable, loving biological mother? I'd suggest to Taylor that having a child alone requires a woman to let go of "self-absorption" and to set aside her "ego."

Editor's Choice

Does Benjamin Schwarz seriously believe that Fred MacMurray's performance in *Double Indemnity* (1944) is "one of the best in the history of American film" (Editor's Choice, September *Atlantic*)? After many years of watching movies and of reading criticism and film commentary, I'd say that's a new one on me. While most observers rate *Double Indemnity* as a career highlight for MacMurray (as he did during his lifetime), most of the praise for acting in that film has over the years (rightly) gone to Barbara Stanwyck. It looks to me as though Schwarz has just founded a fan club of one.

Larry Green
Vancouver, B.C.

In his review of Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars* (Editor's Choice, October *Atlantic*), Benjamin Schwarz expresses surprise that Duffy did not cite a line in Shakespeare's Sonnet 73—"Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang"—as an allusion to iconoclasm. Duffy no doubt failed to mention it because such a political reference is simply not there.

In my reading, this line is all a part of the trope of the poem: the speaker comparing his old age to nature in winter. "Choirs" is so obviously in apposition with "boughs" in the line above ("Upon those boughs which shake against the cold") that I wonder how anyone could think to take it otherwise than "I am now an old man who not so very long ago was much like a blossoming tree in whose boughs birds warbled sweetly." This is a love sonnet, not a historical/political play.

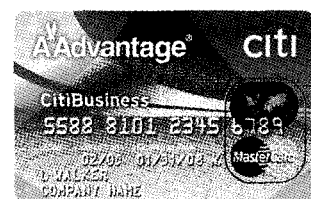
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Greenville, S.C.

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Benjamin Schwarz replies:

Well, Mr. Green, that's why God made chocolate and vanilla. In his performance MacMurray brilliantly marries menace and affability. He's created a truly decent sociopath, and his is among the smoothest and most natural performances in American cinema. Stanwyck did a splendid job, of course, but she was playing her favorite and most familiar role here: the tough, sexy dame. I prefer her in Preston Sturges's The Lady Eve.

As for Daniel Myers, he seems to have a one-dimensional view of Shakespeare's sonnet, and he seems to be a somewhat simplistic reader. The sonnet is a love poem, but it also resonates with political and historical meaning. Nearly every Shakespearean scholar has read the line as, among other things, a reference to the dissolution of the monasteries. It's also, of course, a comparison of the speaker's old age to nature in winter. For a more nuanced way to read this sonnet, and literature in general, Myers should take a cue from this passage in William Empson's classic Seven Types of Ambiguity:

The fundamental situation, whether it deserves to be called ambiguous or not, is that a word or a grammatical structure is effective in several ways at once. To take a famous example, there is no pun, double syntax, or dubiety of feeling in *Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang*, but the comparison holds for many reasons; because ruined monastery choirs are places in which to sing, because they involve sitting in a row, because they are made of wood, are carved into knots and so forth, because they used to be surrounded by a sheltering building crystallised out of the likeness of a forest, and coloured with stained glass and painting like flowers and leaves, because they are now abandoned by all but the grey walls coloured like the skies of winter, because the cold and Narcissistic charm suggested by choir-boys suits well with Shakespeare's feeling for the object of the Sonnets, and for various sociological and historical reasons (the protestant destruction of monasteries; fear of puritanism), which it would be hard now to trace out in their proportions; these reasons, and many more relating the simile to its place in the Sonnet, must all combine to give the line its beauty, and there is a sort of ambiguity in

not knowing which of them to hold most clearly in mind. Clearly this is involved in all such richness and heightening of effect, and the machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry.

Writing Workshops

Two decades have passed since Rick Moody spent his years in Columbia's M.F.A. program being miserable ("Writers and Mentors," Fiction Issue 2005). He might like it better now. The program is still big, yes, but many of us view its size as a strength. Columbia fiction students represent a wide range of style, subject matter, and thematic occupation unavailable at smaller programs. Moreover, the program is no longer internally competitive the way Moody describes, allowing us to lean on those individual voices for reactions that extend our understanding of both our readers and our own work. The faculty as a whole subscribes to no specific aesthetic, the range of teachers' interests reflecting the diversity of their students.

Moody claims that the ethics of the corporate-governance model, applied at the "topmost levels" of Columbia, "must certainly trickle down into individual departments" and affect how writing workshops are run. He strongly implies that as a result, current writing students are stuck asking predictable questions in order to streamline results and ensure quality control. He is simply wrong. Workshop atmosphere is dictated not by the favorite management model of Columbia's president, Lee Bollinger, but by the instructor and the workshop participants.

*Jae Won Chung
Columbia University
New York, N.Y.*

Many of the people who dismiss graduate programs as inessential, perhaps destructive, are also writers who have graduated from the very top M.F.A. programs themselves. Maybe the workshop has as much responsibility to push a young writer to proclaim his or her own crucial minority dissent as to produce a community of the like-

minded. Who's to say that Rick Moody's unpleasant experiences might not have proved as productive for him as I find the much more constructively critical experiences I have as a student in M.F.A. writing workshops today?

*Matthew Griffin
Columbia University
New York, N.Y.*

Workshops are not about "photocopying stories, handing them out, collecting responses, handing back the responses." They are about arduous and serious labor, about reading and writing and critical thinking and challenging ourselves on all fronts. There is nothing corporate about the workshop; it is democratic in design. It is *not* creative writing by committee. To suggest so demeans the intelligence of student writers.

Workshops *are* untidy and often unpredictable and as complex as the manuscripts, students, and leaders who tenant them. The houses are *not* all gray. It disheartens me to read the same-old, same-old complaint from Rick Moody, because I admire the risks that he takes in his own work.

*Joan Connor
Director, Creative Writing
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio*

The Wrong Lesson

Caroline Elkins ("The Wrong Lesson," July/August *Atlantic*) worries that our war on terror is to some extent being guided by "a flawed historical analogy" drawn from British experiences in counterinsurgency, courting the risk that we may replicate repressive imperial practices. As the one who injected the pseudo-gang analogy into our strategic bloodstream, I can only say that I share her concerns. Indeed, it is because I worry about our over-reacting to the global intifada that I have advanced a number of smaller-scale alternatives, including the use of pseudo-gang surrogates. I find it far more sensible to fight dispersed terror networks with roving networks of our own than to rely on "shock and awe" aerial bombardment and traditional military occupation, the meth-



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to have it make some difference that you
have lived and lived well."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

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ods that have characterized too many of our efforts over the past few years.

We'll do better with this nimbler, more networked approach. And we can adopt it without embracing the coarse conduct that accompanied Frank Kitson's mad Arthurian quest to hold together a dying empire. For we are not trying to hang on to colonies; we are tracking a network operating in more than sixty countries. We want members of terrorist cells and their potential recruits to fear making contact with others, and then to be duped by our own cells when they finally risk reaching out. There is no need for a reign of terror anywhere as a prerequisite for undertaking such a campaign.

Perhaps the point is that history does not lock us into a predestined route. When Santayana spoke of learning the lessons of history, I'm sure he had in mind identifying what has enduring value and avoiding a repeat of the calamitous. Elkins admits that the pseudo-gang idea could be effective, but she believes we will adopt a host of terrible practices along with it. Though I thank her for sending up this flare, she's a little late. Between the mistreatment of detainees and the heavy noncombatant casualties in Iraq, we are already in a parlous ethical state. Carefully adopting innovative approaches is the only way to get out of the hole we have dug for ourselves.

John Arquilla
Professor of Defense Analysis
U.S. Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, Calif.

Caroline Elkins misrepresents both current American strategy and the historical record of British counterinsurgency. Her claim that American practice is converging on the British model is largely false, and her polemical treatment of British counterinsurgent policy is misleading. If one accepts the need to restore civil order in Iraq, then the appropriate question is how best to accomplish the task. British counterinsurgent practice, though not without its faults, can improve the efficacy and precision of U.S. strategy in Iraq. The skillful use of defectors is central to victory in counterinsurgency. Defection removes enemy fighters without the

damage associated with offensive operations and provides invaluable insights into insurgent organizations. Compared with the current series of raids and sweeps along the Syrian border, pseudo-gangs composed of such defectors are a more viable and less destructive means of exploiting the fissures in the Sunni resistance.

If Elkins's grasp of current U.S. strategy is tenuous, then her attempts to link British counterinsurgent policies to post-colonial misbehavior are weaker still. No serious student of contemporary Malaysian politics attributes Muhammad Mahatir's imprisonment of his deputy prime minister to British colonial or counterinsurgent policy, and no informed person would equate such actions with the sweeping violations of human rights in North Korea, Belarus, and Zimbabwe. Elkins's attempt to shift the blame from contemporary local elites to the former colonial powers is deeply unfortunate; these arguments support those who would rather divert attention from atrocious governance than face the need for genuine reform. When scholars at first-rate institutions can survey the current scene and conclude that "the real 'outposts of tyranny' are the institutions left behind by the colonial and military strategists in Britain's twentieth-century empire," then we have cause to worry that academia is no longer an outpost of reason.

Colin Jackson and Austin Long
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Mass.

Caroline Elkins asks, "Are pseudo-gangs really the best model for the United States in its global war on terror?" Yes, they might be—but even if they are not, they are a tried and true method of counterinsurgency that has been employed with great success not only by General Sir Frank Kitson but also by Los Pepes, the U.S.-sponsored paramilitaries fighting Pablo Escobar in Colombia. The lessons, insights, and observations of Kitson and others form the foundation for almost every successful counterinsurgency campaign worldwide, and are as pertinent today as they were fifty years ago. Furthermore, trying to impose twenty-first-century standards

of morality on Kitson is akin to demonizing Jefferson and Washington as slaveholders even though they helped write the Declaration of Independence and win the Revolutionary War. As a Marine who has served in Iraq, I believe pseudo-gangs would work in a limited application that directly targeted those who aid the insurgents. However, these organizations often grow as powerful as the lawful armed forces, and thus become inclined to compete for power, authority, and legitimacy. Once that happens, they are difficult to disband. Given that nothing about the insurgency in Iraq is radically innovative, we should not keep looking to new concepts for the answer. We continue to disregard successful counterinsurgency campaigns undertaken in the Philippines and El Salvador, and also lessons learned from Southeast Asia and the Banana Wars. Elkins and others should embrace and spread the word about Kitson, not vilify him—or we as a nation may be forced to painfully relearn lessons he articulated thirty-four years ago.

Major Adam Strickland
Alexandria, Va.

Caroline Elkins replies:

To varying degrees each of these letters endorses the view that desperate times call for desperate measures. But neither the United States nor any other power can adopt counterinsurgency techniques without taking into account the context in which they were first used in the twentieth century, and the context in which they are being used today.

At issue is the line between legitimate and illegitimate means. If history teaches us anything, it is that this line must be closely policed in times of war, particularly when the maneuvers are being forged in political circumstances that have such strong parallels to those of Kitson's time. Although I applaud John Arquilla's concerns, I would also suggest that the warning "flare" is not too late. Current wisdom suggests that the resistance could last at least another ten years. The insurgencies in such former British colonies as Kenya and Malaya stretched for nearly a decade or more. Indeed, Britain's counterinsurgency tactics eventually brought those wars to an end, though at continuing cost to the regions in question.

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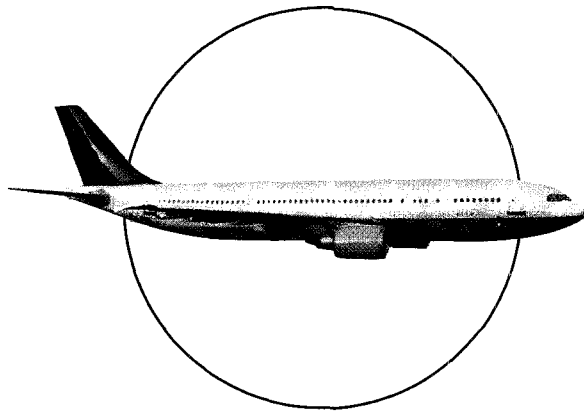


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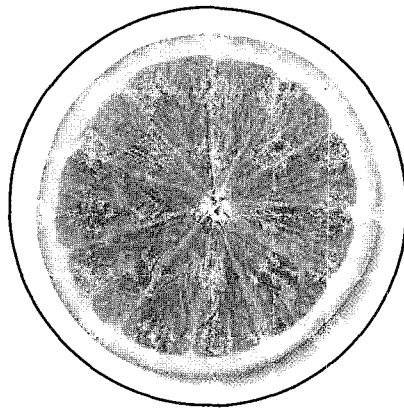
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Home Runs

The Calendar section of the September *Atlantic* describes Barry Bonds as “clos[ing] in on Babe Ruth’s home-run record.” I think that a fellow named Henry Aaron has held this record for the past few years.

Wayne Citrin
Boulder, Colo.

Matthew Quirk replies:

He certainly has. Although Bonds, with the third highest number of career home runs (703), is closing in on No. 2 Babe Ruth’s long-standing record of 714, he is still a way off from Hank Aaron’s all-time record of 755.

Advice & Consent

In his article “Meltdown: A Case Study” (July/August *Atlantic*), Benjamin M. Friedman suggests that “the new Statue of Liberty (completed in 1886) ... proclaimed America’s welcome to the world’s ‘huddled masses’ and ‘wretched refuse.’” In fact, at first the statue did not proclaim welcome to anyone. It was given to the citizens of the United States by French citizens in honor of our liberty and the hope that such liberty would find its way into other countries. The statue didn’t extend “America’s welcome” till 1903, when the last five lines of the sonnet “The New Colossus” were inscribed on its pedestal.

Worth Blaney
Palm Desert, Calif.

One aspect of John Gardner’s philosophy that Mary Gordon (“Moral Fiction,” Fiction Issue 2005) does not touch on directly is his belief in the writing process as a kind of sacred cauldron for cooking down characters and creeds to their most elemental forms. A work can be moral, Gardner says, if it deals with any subject—pleasant or otherwise—in a way that carefully considers all sides. (Implicit in this theory is that “good” will always “win” if one gets the process right, a leap of faith that taxes my optimism.)

This notion of the inherent morality of the “true” writing process is connected to Gardner’s belief, as a teacher

and critic, that fiction should be a “vivid and continuous dream,” immersing the reader in its world from the first sentence of a story or book. Anything that calls attention to the fact that you are reading a made-up story is immoral—even though Gardner himself dabbled in such tricks in *October Light* and other books.

Gardner’s pronouncements on moral fiction—in his criticism, interviews, and even fiction—are varied and sometimes contradictory. *On Moral Fiction* itself nearly torpedoed his career, and the subject matter seemed in some ways to bring out the worst in him. Yet his passion for the writing process, and his belief in the ability of art to be inspiring rather than just entertaining, are infectious and, at some level, central to the reasons why any creative person creates.

David Stanton
Scotch Plains, N.J.

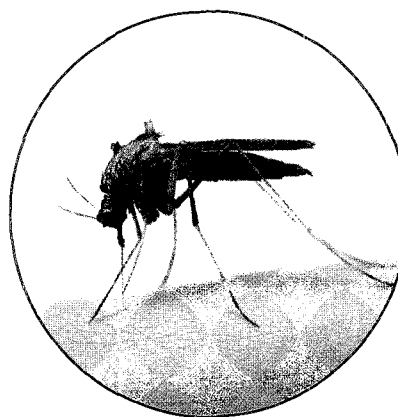
Terry Castle writes in “Gender Bending, Pt. 1” (September *Atlantic*) that she has yet to meet a female contemporary who has read *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Though I am not sure I can be considered a contemporary, having recently qualified for Medicare, Castle may be interested to know that I read this book some forty years ago, when my husband worked as a logging engineer for a well-known oil-service company in Egypt. Our environment provided few distractions apart from a small daughter born in Cairo, so when I came across the book I indeed read it from cover to cover.

Christa Howells
Schulenburg, Texas

Let me point out two factual errors in Christopher Hitchens’s review of Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown* (“Hobbes in the Himalayas,” September *Atlantic*). First: the correct name of the Indian epic he alludes to is the *Ramayana*, not *Ram Leela*. Second: the *Bhagavad Gita*, which Hitchens calls an Indian epic, is not one. It is a philosophical poem, in Sanskrit, in 700 verses, by an anonymous poet.

K. N. Kutty
Professor Emeritus, English
Eastern Connecticut State University
Willimantic, Conn.

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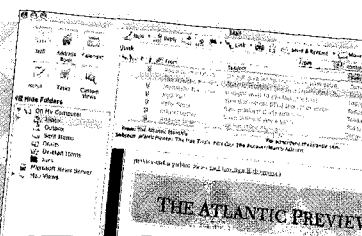
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THE AGENDA

NOVEMBER 2005 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

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COMMENT

Things Left Undone

*Why has an administration that talks so much about
homeland security been so unable to secure the homeland?*

BY RICHARD A. CLARKE

Imagine if, in advance of Hurricane Katrina, thousands of trucks had been waiting with water and ice and medicine and other supplies. Imagine if 4,000 National Guardsmen and an equal number of emergency aid workers from around the country had been moved into place, and five million meals had been ready to serve. Imagine if scores of mobile satellite-communications stations had been prepared to move in instantly, ensuring that rescuers could talk to one another. Imagine if all this had been managed by a federal-and-state task force that not only directed the government response but also helped coordinate the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and other outside groups.

Actually, this requires no imagination: it is exactly what the Bush administration did a year ago when Florida braced for Hurricane Frances. Of course the circumstances then were very special: it was two months before the presidential election, and Florida's twenty-seven electoral votes were hanging in the balance. It is hardly surprising that Washington ensured the success of "the largest response to a natural disaster we've ever had in this country." The president himself passed out water bottles to Floridians driven from their homes.

What is surprising, though, is that performing to this standard should be the exception for governmental departments whose *raison d'être* is high performance at times of crisis. The failure to anticipate the ravages of Hurricane Katrina has for weeks been the object of trenchant observation. Some have pointed out that federal funding for bolstering the levees was denied, and that federal assets were not made available before the hurricane. The indictment goes on and on. But it is important to discern the larger pattern of neglect, visible not only in Katrina but also in the aftermath of 9/11 and the run-up to the Iraq War.

The problem behind the negligent response to Katrina certainly begins with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, now buried in a big department, its staff reduced by 10 percent and its budget cut. (Today the agency is run by the previous director's former college roommate, a political appointee, whose past executive experience consists of running an international association concerned with Arabian horses.) But the issues go beyond FEMA to the agency's adoptive parent, the Department of Homeland Security.

After opposing the creation of the department, the Bush administration flip-flopped under public pressure and decided that it was a great idea. There were always signs, however, that the administration did not really mean it. Initially the department was to be revenue-neutral—that is, it would receive no new resources. When Congress insisted on pork-barrel appropriations with some play money for every state and city, the administration went along. But although many new programs were launched, few were ever brought to fruition. The department has never produced a multi-year plan based on actual requirements—a path to achieve specific, measurable goals. None of our vulnerabilities—on our borders, or in our transportation system, our chemical plants, our energy facilities, our ports—have been significantly diminished. And now we see that our ability to deal with the aftermath of disasters, whatever their cause, has actually regressed since the mid-1990s, when FEMA was an independent agency with cabinet status, run by competent and nonpartisan personnel.

Why has an administration that talks so much about terrorism and homeland security demonstrated so little competence when it comes to securing the homeland? Part of the reason is management style: the president says he sees his role as that of a CEO, but he performs like a non-executive chairman of the board, not a hands-on supervisor. What is more, the White House inner tribe believes that a strong Department of Homeland Security is not only unnecessary but even antithetical to the administration's political philosophy and interests.

Three reasons for this antipathy are often heard, and they certainly account for part of the White House outlook. First, the administration asserts that two thirds or three quarters of al-Qaeda's managers have been captured or killed, and that al-Qaeda must therefore be on the ropes. Why spend vast sums defending against it? The counter-argument, of course, comes in the form of the recent terrorist attacks in Madrid, Istanbul, Taba, London, Bali, Riyadh, Sharm el Sheikh, and Casablanca—

all the work of al-Qaeda and its allies.

Second, the administration points out that no major terrorist acts have occurred on American soil since 9/11. Clearly, we must be doing something right, they say, and maybe we don't need to do much more—at least not at home. Yet if the statements of the FBI and other agencies can be credited, terrorists have been assessing targets in locations as diverse as Las Vegas, Newark, Los Angeles, and Columbus.

Third, some who would defend the administration argue that the entire GDP could be poured into the bottomless pit of homeland security. Better, they say, to invest in intelligence to nail terrorists before they strike. Well, of course that's better; but as the second round of London subway bombings showed, not even knowing that an existing terrorist cell is going after a particular target means you will find the cell in time. Conversely, spending money and effort on countermeasures really can work: planned attacks on the Brooklyn Bridge and the U.S. consulate in Istanbul were thwarted because the defenses were good.

Beyond these surface explanations, however, lie bigger factors. One is simply that other administration policies regularly trump homeland security. Under a firearms policy largely dictated by the National Rifle Association, people on terrorist watch lists can and do buy guns in the United States without difficulty. Congress decided, over the objections of the FBI, that government records of who bought guns should not be kept for more than twenty-four hours. Health-care policy has contributed to the reduction in the number of beds in America's hospitals, reducing the surge capacity required to handle a catastrophe like Katrina, a biological-weapons attack, or a pandemic such as avian flu. Immigration policy seems designed mostly to provide American businesses and farms with millions of low-wage laborers, rather than to keep track of who is crossing our borders or living here illegally. Energy policy, particularly the new Energy Act, gives priority to building new fossil-fuel and nuclear facilities. Congress has just given the

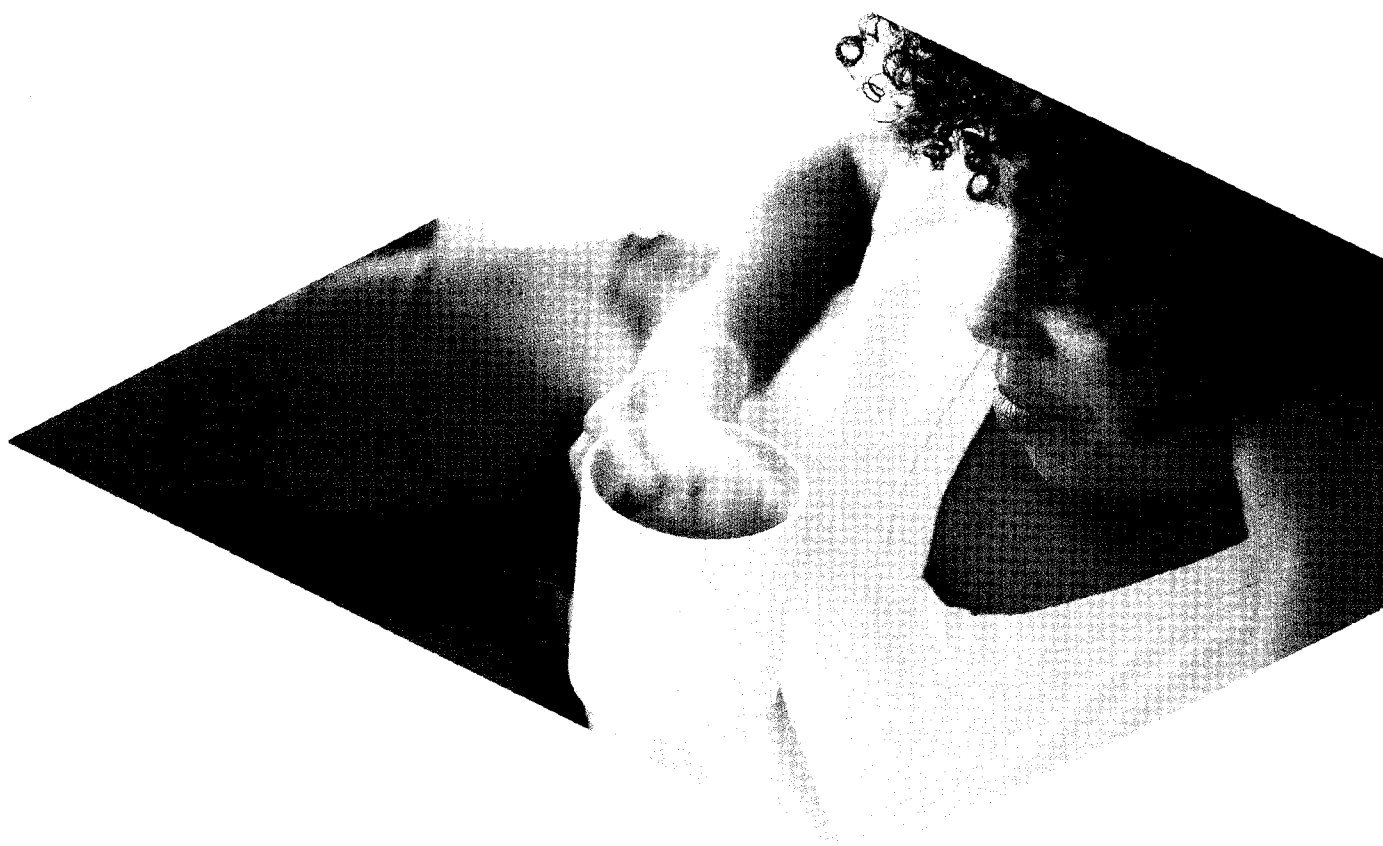
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission clear authority to locate highly volatile liquid-natural-gas ports—perfect terrorism targets—over the objections of city and state governments.

Moreover, the Bush administration simply dislikes spending money on many domestic initiatives, in contrast to its open-ended attitude toward military outlays and expeditions. Of all the new funding that went to national defense in the four years following 9/11, only 14 percent went to homeland security. People concerned about readiness on the home front have taken to comparing the cost of specific projects to the “burn rate” of spending on the war, as in this analysis published in *Mother Jones*: security upgrades for all subway and commuter-rail systems, or twenty days in Iraq; security upgrades for 361 U.S. ports, or four days in Iraq; explosives screening for all U.S. passenger-airline baggage, or ten days in Iraq.

The most compelling explanation for the lack of investment in domestic security comes from the president himself—over and over again. His strategy on terrorism, he says, is “to fight them over there [in Iraq], so that we do not have to fight them here at home.” Spending on the war in Iraq greatly exceeds all federal spending on homeland security. But as most knowledgeable observers attest, the war is producing more terrorists than it is eliminating. One can be certain that they are learning the lessons of New Orleans—maybe faster than our government is.

Many Americans are familiar with a prayer of confession, perhaps learned in childhood, that includes the line “We have left undone those things which we ought to have done” and concludes, “Have mercy upon us.” It is time we admit we have left things undone, and set about doing them. When the next breach occurs, we will be wishing that the federal agency at the forefront was a professional organization capable of mitigating a disaster, rather than being one itself. ▀

Richard A. Clarke was the national coordinator for security and counterterrorism for Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, and is the author of Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror.



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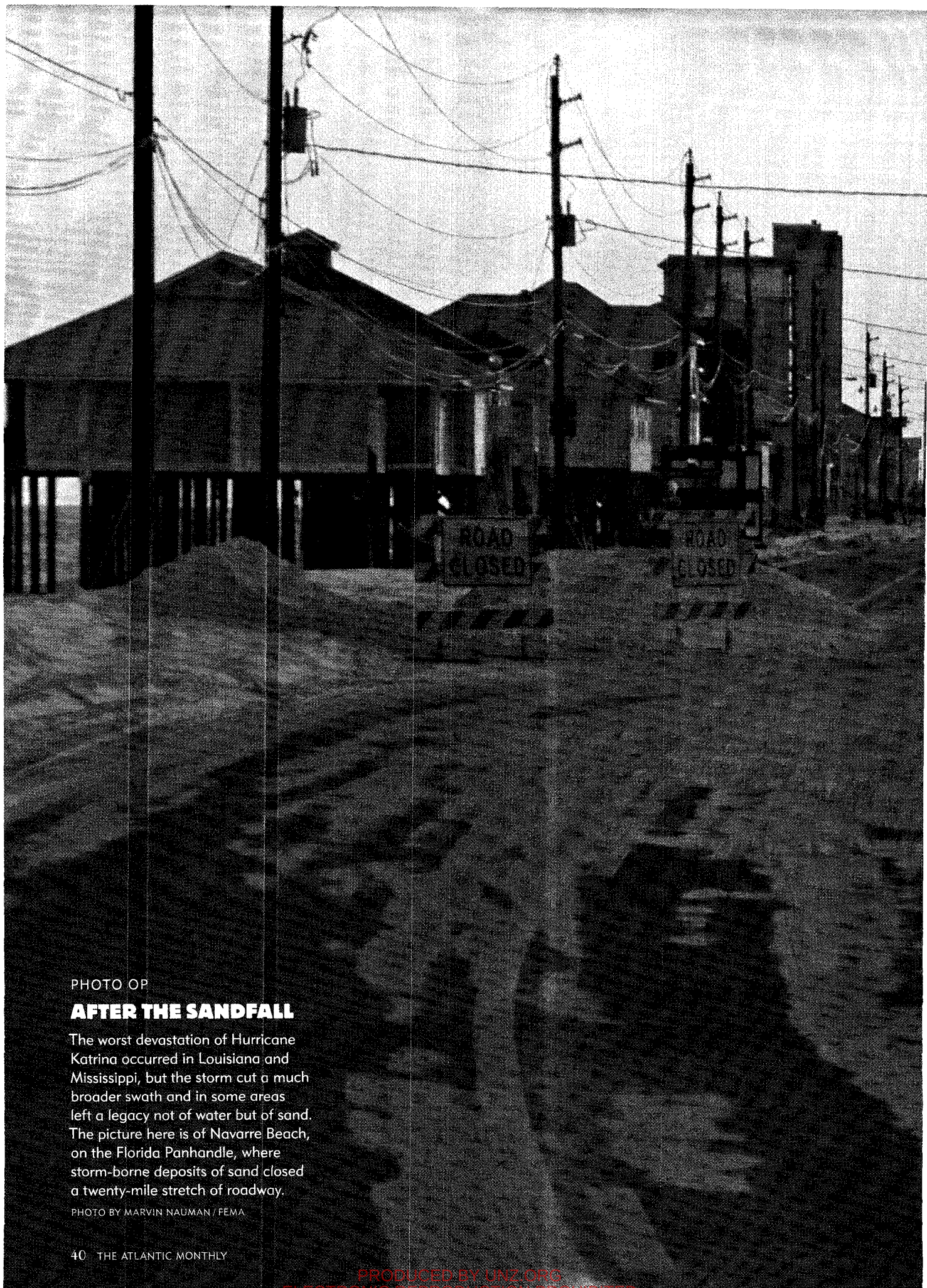
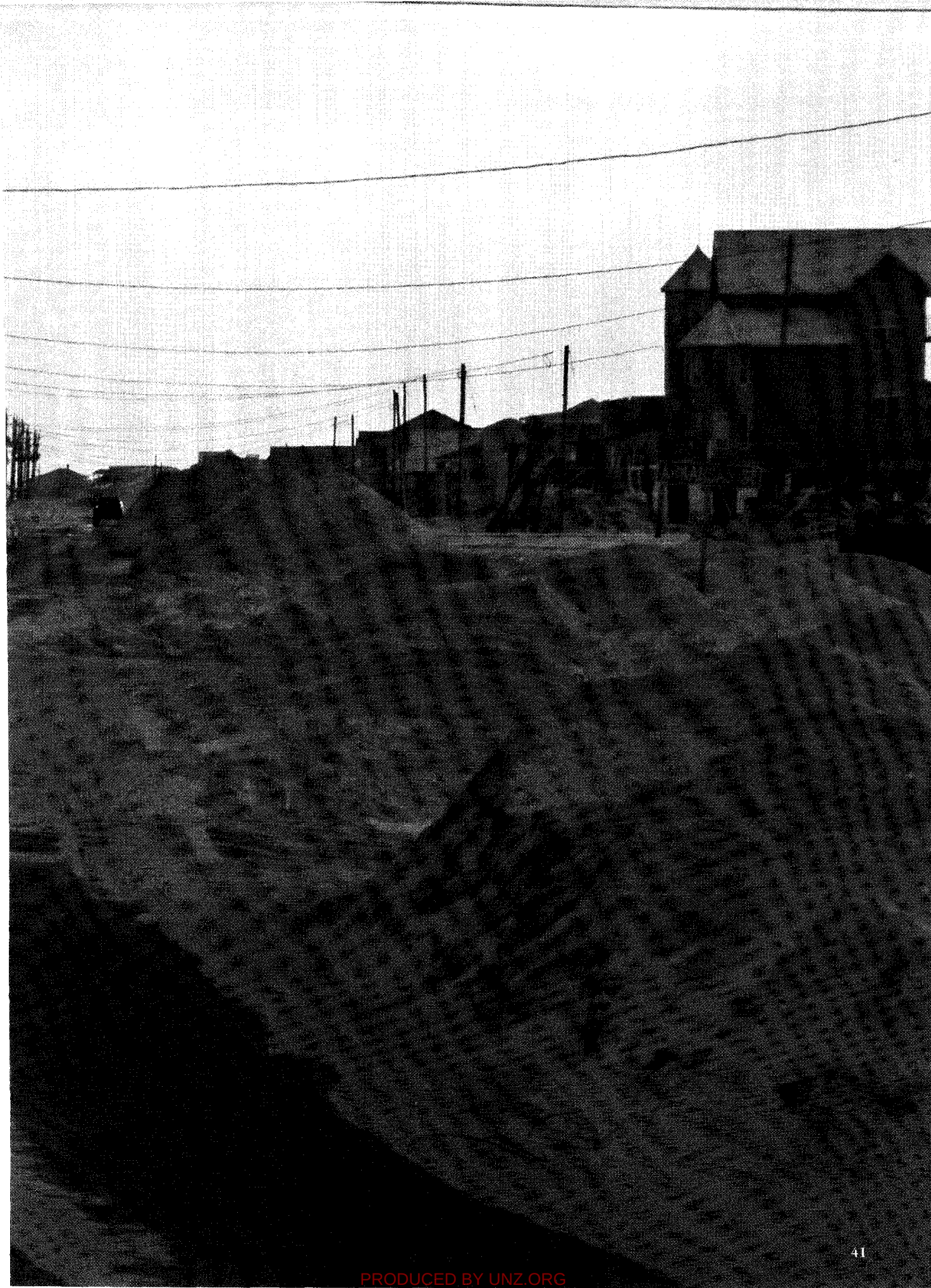


PHOTO OF

AFTER THE SANDFALL

The worst devastation of Hurricane Katrina occurred in Louisiana and Mississippi, but the storm cut a much broader swath and in some areas left a legacy not of water but of sand. The picture here is of Navarre Beach, on the Florida Panhandle, where storm-borne deposits of sand closed a twenty-mile stretch of roadway.

PHOTO BY MARVIN NAUMAN / FEMA



Progressive Dementia

The president may not get his way on Social Security reform, but one element of the plan will rise again. It shouldn't

BY JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ

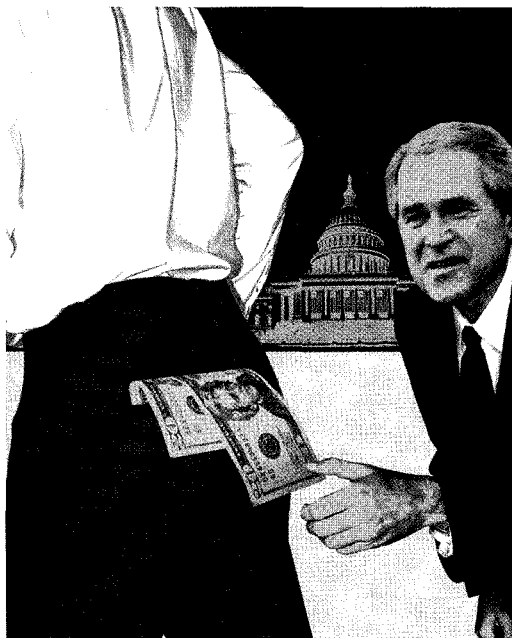
The proposed changes in Social Security for which President Bush has been stubbornly campaigning all year will in all likelihood, despite a chilly public reception, surface as legislation for congressional debate this fall. But the focus of the debate has shifted significantly since the president first brought attention to the subject. And regardless of whether his specific proposals stall or die, one issue now on the table will materialize every time Social Security reform comes up.

When the president introduced the topic of Social Security reform, in his State of the Union speech last winter, his focus was on creating individual Social Security accounts, which would allow participants to divert some money from payroll deductions to private investment. It soon became clear, however, that this would leave the system no more solvent than before. In fact, the federal government would have to borrow trillions of dollars to make up for the lost revenue. This was a problem, given that concern about solvency was the ostensible reason for proposing changes in the first place.

In truth, it is not at all clear that Social Security is in deep trouble; as with many things in economics, one's assessment depends on what projections one uses. But if it is, "trouble" simply means that its projected expenditures exceed its projected revenues. Only two solutions exist: reduce expenditures or increase revenues. Faced with criticism that his original proposal did neither, the president floated another one in a speech last April.

The art of politics is to design a solution that feels painless to all. (Or,

as the seventeenth-century French finance minister Jean Baptiste Colbert observed, "The art of taxation consists in so plucking the goose as to obtain the largest possible amount of feathers with the smallest possible amount of hissing.") The president's version is called "progressive indexation." This proposed path to solvency has just enough com-



plexity and fine print to make it sound serious—and to make a full analysis of its consequences difficult.

Progressive indexation would change the way Social Security benefits are computed. Benefits are now based on recipients' contributions, but they are indexed to the general level of wages, and rise over time. As the country becomes more prosperous, and wages increase, retirees get more money. Under the president's proposal benefits for most Americans would increasingly be indexed to prices rather than to wages; the higher a worker's income, the greater the proportion pegged to prices. Because prices increase more slowly than wages (sometimes much more slowly), this would mean an

enormous reduction in benefits—and enormous savings for the Social Security system. At the same time, the poorest Americans—those with incomes below \$25,000—would still receive benefits indexed to wages. In championing a change that would penalize the better-off while protecting the poor, the president managed to cast himself as something of a latter-day Robin Hood.

The first question to ask is, Does progressive indexation really address Social Security's potential problems? In fact it would be hard to think of a worse way to address them.

To begin with, we don't actually know how serious the shortfall is. To assess the system's solvency we must make economic projections far into the future. As the chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisers during the 1990s, I had to make projections about where the economy was going to be one, two, or three years ahead; frankly, I often found myself facing a cloudy crystal ball. Forecasting a few years out is hard enough; forecasting seventy-five years out is essentially impossible. Slight changes in life expectancy, immigration, wage growth, and interest rates could have large effects on the solvency of the system.

For instance, if immigration and productivity continue at their current rates, and if real wages move in tandem with productivity, as they have done historically, the Social Security system as it now stands will remain solvent. (It is perhaps not surprising that when President Bush sold Congress on his tax cuts, he did so by using growth projections far more optimistic than the ones he is now using for Social Security. The president is proving to be more dismal, one might say, than most economists.)

Of course, no one can say for sure that a quarter century or a half century hence, Social Security won't be in the bad shape the president fears; and a case can be made for doing something now to forestall problems later. But what we do should be designed to meet needs as they develop.

Progressive indexation is not well designed to address future uncertain-

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*by Robert V. DiClemente,
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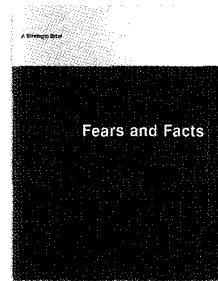
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CASE HISTORY

WHITE HOUSE SLEUTHS

Patrick Fitzgerald, the prosecutor doggedly investigating the Valerie Plame leak, is something of a throwback. Since Watergate most major investigations of high-level political corruption have been undertaken by “independent counsels”—individuals almost entirely outside the purview of the Justice Department, wielding unlimited budgets and nearly limitless authority. Before that “special counsels”—who were selected by, answerable to, and subject to being fired or financially hamstrung by the attorney general—were the norm. Fitzgerald fits into the latter category. Should the public be concerned? If the history of the special counsel is any guide, perhaps Fitzgerald himself should be. As it turns out, special counsels have outed the truth in some of government’s biggest scandals—but at times they’ve been treated unkindly for their efforts when the truth has implicated powerful figures in the White House. Here are some major investigations by special counsels in the past, as identified by the American Enterprise Institute–Brookings Institution Project on the Independent Counsel Statute. —MATTHEW QUIRK

The Whiskey Ring. 1875. The former U.S. senator John B. Henderson was asked to look into a conspiracy: distillers were under-reporting their hooch and splitting the saved taxes with corrupt Treasury officials. Several hundred indictments were obtained, and a mid-level official was convicted. Henderson went a little too high up when he indicted President Ulysses S. Grant’s personal secretary and implied that the president had some involvement in the case. Henderson was fired. Shortly thereafter Grant had to dismiss the secretary for using privileged government information to play the gold market.

Teapot Dome. 1924–1930. Calvin Coolidge selected the Democrat Atlee Pomerene and the Republican Owen Roberts to look into accusations that the secretary of the interior, Albert B. Fall, had leased rights to develop the Navy’s oil reserves to two businessmen in exchange for bribes of \$409,000 along with six heifers, a yearling bull, two boars, four sows, and an English thoroughbred. (Fall’s neighbors had become suspicious about improvements to his ranch.) Senators told Pomerene and Roberts to be wary of the attorney general, who “had a hand in every dirty piece of business.” Ultimately, Fall landed in jail, and the attorney general (among others) resigned. For their trouble the special counsels and their firms had to cover many of the investigation’s costs until the government finally picked up the tab.

Truman Tax Scandals. 1952. Newbold Morris, a New York Republican, was made a special counsel to plumb accusations that the Department of Justice had looked the other way while Internal Revenue Service collectors took illegal payments. Backed by President Harry Truman, Morris asked the attorney general, J. Howard McGrath, to disclose financial records and notes. McGrath refused, and fired Morris after just sixty-three days on the case; Truman quickly secured the attorney general’s resignation.

The Carter Peanut Warehouse. 1979. Paul Curran, a former U.S. attorney in New York, investigated allegations that President Jimmy Carter had used his peanut warehouse as a front for illegal campaign contributions in 1976. Within seven months Curran cleared Carter. He wrote, “Every nickel and every peanut have been traced into and out of the Warehouse, and no funds were unlawfully diverted in either direction.”

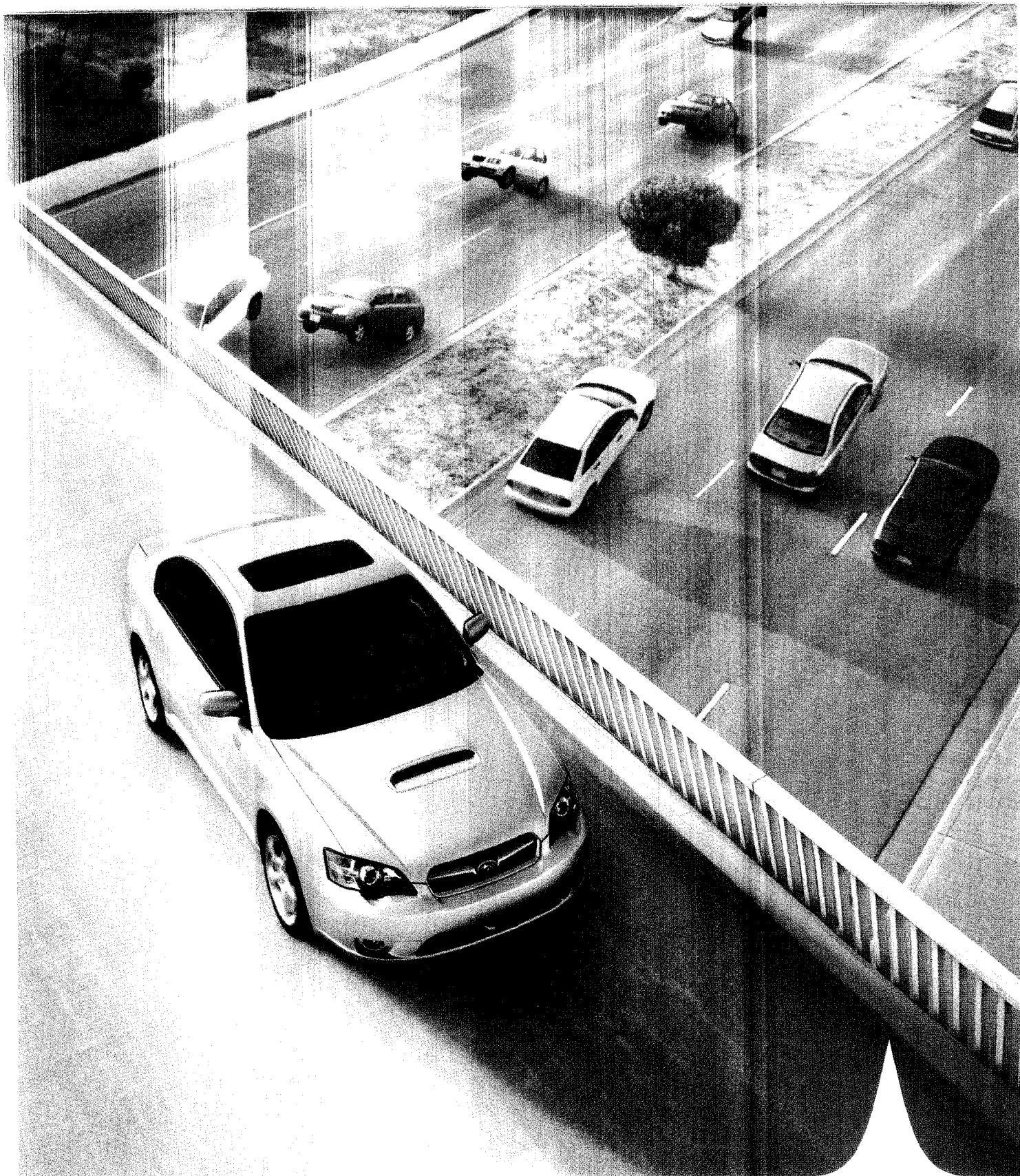
ties. It would improve Social Security’s fiscal solvency most when real wages were increasing rapidly. But under those circumstances the system would in all likelihood remain fully solvent without interference. When real wages were stagnating, progressive indexation would do nothing to improve Social Security’s condition. But those are precisely the circumstances under which the system would face the greatest danger of insolvency.

In short, progressive indexation is a mechanism that would “work” when we didn’t need it and wouldn’t work when we needed it most:

Granted, there is a middle ground where progressive indexation could in theory have some modest effect. But here we need to revisit the issue of individual accounts, because combining them with progressive indexation would almost certainly drain money out of the system, exacerbating the solvency problem or even undermining Social Security altogether.

Some background: The president has argued that individuals would be able to get a better return on their retirement accounts than the government does. On this he is simply wrong: no private firm can compete with the Social Security Administration in the efficiency with which it has administered its funds. In other countries that have privatized their social-welfare systems, benefits have fallen—in Britain, according to one estimate, by as much as 40 percent—as year after year transaction costs eat up what workers have put away.

Social Security does *seem* to give lower returns than private investment, for four reasons. First, it is safer. Second, there is a hidden tax in the system for middle- and upper-income workers: their benefits are reduced to help ensure that the poorest Americans do not retire in poverty. Third, most of the standard calculations of Social Security’s rate of return do not take into account the value of survivors’ and disability benefits. Because more than a third of those who currently collect benefits are not retired workers (among them nearly 12 million spouses and children of retired, disabled, or deceased workers, and 6 mil-



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lion disabled workers), ignoring these benefits significantly lowers estimates of returns. And fourth, some of the contributions of today's workers are used to finance the retirement of previous generations—this is the nature of a partial pay-as-you-go system.

Already Social Security is being portrayed as a bad deal, although it is not, particularly when one takes into account that no *private* investment can, for instance, insure one against inflation. (Only recently has the government provided inflation-protected securities, and the returns on Social Security contributions do not look unfavorable in comparison to the returns on these securities.) If it is a bad deal for some, that is not because it is inefficient but because it is redistributive. Under progressive indexation the benefits per dollar contribution of all but the poorest would be cut, thus—to follow the logic—making Social Security an even worse deal for all but the poorest Americans. One calculation has shown that by 2045 the rate of return for a worker earning \$58,400 would be cut by more than 50 percent.

If progressive indexation and individual accounts both came to pass, middle- and upper-income Americans would look ahead at the likely consequences and vote with their feet. That is, they would divert as much money as possible out of Social Security and into their individual accounts. This might be heralded as a vote of confidence in the individual-account idea—and it would generate billions of dollars in commissions for managers of private assets. But it would erode, not enhance, the solvency of the Social Security system as a whole. Simply put, those who once contributed the most to the system would drop out to whatever extent they could.

Of course, a system of progressive indexation without individual accounts wouldn't have this outflow problem (though one can't imagine the administration's giving up private accounts). But even that arrangement would raise a serious question of equity.

Since the current system of wage indexation means that benefits increase with average wage levels, which normally increase far faster than prices, it allows workers to benefit from the pro-

ductivity gains that usually drive wage increases. These productivity gains are usually not the result of anything individual workers do, but follow from innovation and investment.

A simple philosophical question: Should those who are fortunate enough to have high wages today, because productivity in general has increased, share some of their good fortune with workers of previous generations? The answer has fundamental implications for the nature of our society, particularly if wages increase rapidly. Assume, for instance, that real wages (taking inflation into account) increase by three percent annually, which means they double roughly every twenty years: the average wage of a forty-year-old worker will be approximately *four* times what an eighty-year-old earned back when he was forty. And under a system of individual accounts, or of price indexing, even if the eighty-year-old saved so avidly that his retirement income was the same as his average working income (which is seldom the case), he would have a quarter of the income of the forty-year-old worker. The current Social Security system goes a little way toward rectifying such inequalities. If our economy sees a three percent annual growth in real wages, our eighty-year-old retiree will have a share in the bounty: his Social Security payments will be four times as high as they would have been had the president's progressive-indexation plan been in place.

Under Bush's proposal there would be an enormous income gap across generations, on top of the already increasing income gaps that separate various groups in our society—the skilled and the unskilled, college graduates and high school dropouts. This gap would exist not because the aged failed to work hard while they worked, or even to save, but because they were born when they were born.

Those who advocate a switch to progressive indexation need to explain not only how it can possibly work, despite theory and evidence to the contrary, but also why the price of a more divided society is worth paying even if it does. ▀

Joseph E. Stiglitz is a professor of economics at Columbia University and a winner of the Nobel Prize in economics.

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The energy industry needs to get more from existing fields while continuing to search for new reserves. Automakers must continue to improve fuel efficiency and perfect hybrid vehicles. Technological improvements are needed so that wind, solar and hydrogen can be more viable parts of the energy equation. Governments need to create energy policies that promote economically and environmentally sound development. Consumers must demand, and be willing to pay for, some of these solutions, while practicing conservation efforts of their own.

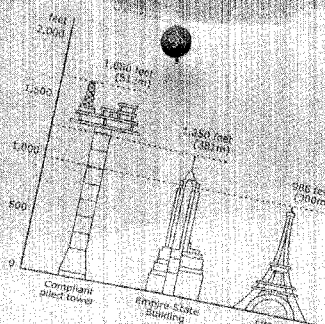
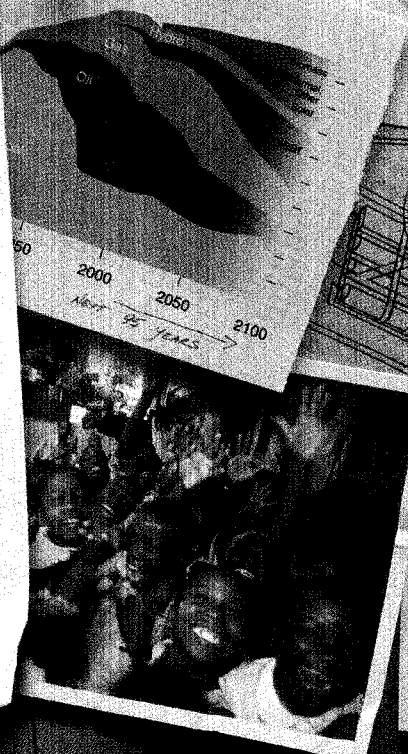
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What Would Zimbabwe Do?

"Comparativism"—using foreign legal rulings to help interpret the Constitution—is startlingly on the rise in the U.S. Supreme Court

BY EMILY BAZELON

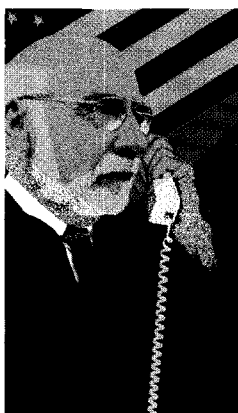
In 1999 one of the scores of death-row appeals that land at the Supreme Court each year caught the eye of Justice Stephen Breyer. Thomas Knight, who had been sentenced to death by the State of Florida in 1975 for killing a married couple, argued in the appeal that he had been living in anguished anticipation of execution for so long that his sentence had become a form of cruel and unusual punishment. Knight's case was joined with that of Carey Moore, who'd been on Nebraska's death row for nineteen years for killing two cabdrivers.

No court in the United States had ever lifted a death sentence for this reason. But Breyer had a hunch that courts in other countries might have done so, and he asked his clerks to investigate. He had issued a similar directive earlier that term, when he wanted to know more about other countries' approaches to campaign-finance law. "I remember his exact words," says one of Breyer's clerks from that year. "He said, 'We're not the only court in the world. See what they have to say.'" Breyer has come to refer to proponents of this approach—namely, judges who use international legal precedents for context as they interpret the U.S. Constitution—as "comparativists."

In their death-penalty research Breyer's clerks found several cases in which courts from around the world, including the European Court of Human Rights and the Supreme Court of India, had expressed serious reservations about whether executions conducted after lengthy delays were humane. When the Court declined to review Knight and Moore's case, Breyer took the unusual step of commenting on it anyway. In a dissent to the Court's denial of review he wrote, "A growing number of courts outside the United States—courts that accept or assume the lawfulness of the death penalty—have

held that lengthy delay in administering a *lawful* death penalty renders ultimate execution inhuman, degrading, or unusually cruel."

None of Breyer's colleagues signed on to the dissent. And in a preview of the resounding rejection of comparativism soon to come from other hard-line conservatives, Clarence Thomas



wrote an opinion ridiculing Breyer's approach. "Were there any support in our own jurisprudence," he argued, "it would be unnecessary for proponents of the claim to rely on the European Court of Human Rights, the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe, the Supreme Court of India, or the Privy Council."

Twenty years ago the exchange of law among nations consisted almost entirely of a "vigorous overseas trade in the Bill of Rights," as one British barrister has put it. Canada, for example, followed the United States' lead on freedom of religion; India did so in balancing the values of freedom of expression and privacy in libel law. But times have changed, and many countries' highest courts have now come into their own. The courts of South Africa and India, for example, have upheld rights to education, housing, and health or medical care that American courts have not recognized. In Europe, too, courts are becoming bolder, despite a tradition of

parliamentary supremacy. Breyer feels strongly that the United States can learn from these developments abroad. "Really, it isn't true that England is the moon, nor is India," he said in a debate with Justice Antonin Scalia last January at American University, in Washington, D.C. Judges in those countries "have problems ... similar to our own."

Breyer is no longer a lonely crusader: comparativism is startlingly in the ascendant in the U.S. Supreme Court, among both the relatively liberal justices and the centrist conservatives. Foreign precedents were at the heart of the Court's recent decisions to strike down sodomy laws (*Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003) and to ban the execution of juveniles (*Roper v. Simmons*, 2005). Both opinions were written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, who often votes with the Court's conservative bloc. They did not sit well with observers on the right. Some conservatives have called for Kennedy's impeachment—and have introduced bills in the House and Senate that would ban American courts from employing any foreign judgment other than centuries-old English common law when interpreting the Constitution.

Kennedy and the other justices who have sympathized with comparativism (Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, David Souter, and John Paul Stevens, along with Sandra Day O'Connor, who announced her resignation last summer) have trod lightly in view of the conservative uproar. Breyer argues that comparativism has a modest aim—to "cast an empirical light" that will reveal new solutions to shared legal problems. He and his allies have pointed out that looking abroad for precedents is not new for the Court: in cases from the 1950s through the 1980s (and also during the 1890s) majorities took account of foreign practices in deciding whether a punishment was permissible. This attracted little notice until Scalia decreed, in the 1989 case *Stanford v. Kentucky* (which allowed juvenile execution), that in weighing whether a punishment was cruel and unusual the Court would consider only "American

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WHO WILL WIN THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE?

When the Nobel Peace Prize is presented, on December 10, the winner will join a veritable Valhalla of do-gooders that includes Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, and Martin Luther King Jr. So it may sound odd to hear U2's lead singer, Bono, touted as a front-runner—at least by the Irish book-maker Paddypower.com. The famously earnest champion of Third World debt relief is among a record 199 nominees on this year's "short" list. But *achtung*, bidders: the prize is expected to go to a person or an organization associated with disaster relief for victims of last year's tsunami. Here are some potential winners. —JOHN SELLERS

11:4 Viktor Yushchenko. The new Ukrainian president embraced the West and quelled anti-Russian sentiments. He was also badly disfigured by poison. The \$1.3 million that accompanies the prize could buy a lot of ointment.

7:1 Bono. He would be the first entertainer to win the award. His credentials include recording a song to benefit tsunami victims. And you think his ego is big now.

14:1 Colin Powell. The former secretary of state was nominated for his help in trying to end the civil war in Sudan. But what about Iraq?

16:1 Bob Geldof. Is Geldof being considered because he organized Live Aid and Live 8, or because he reunited Roger Waters with Pink Floyd?

20:1 Ravi Shankar. The Indian musician influenced the Beatles and sired the pop singer Norah Jones, but he's not known for activism. Close, but no sitar.

25:1 Hugo Chavez. It's a bet Pat Robertson wouldn't take; others seem to agree. Long odds on the beret-wearing, oil-hoarding Venezuelan president.

33:1 Pope John Paul II. Rules forbid nominating the deceased, but the pope passed away just after the Nobel deadline. There's been only one posthumous winner: the UN secretary general Dag Hammarskjöld, in 1961.

250:1 Tony Blair and George Bush. Neither one stands an earthly chance of winning a peace prize during wartime.

conceptions of decency" (his italics).

In overturning *Stanford* this year the *Roper* majority stressed that American courts are not bound to follow rulings from abroad. But of course foreign judgments don't need to be formally binding to be persuasive. Kennedy observed in his opinion that the United States was the *only* country in the world that still executed minors.

Harold Hongju Koh, the dean of the Yale Law School, is one of the leading academic proponents of comparativism. Koh is a veteran litigator who led a partly successful and attention-getting battle in the mid-1990s to force the federal courts to grant a broad array of rights to Haitian émigrés, at Guantánamo Bay and on their way to American shores. He also served as President Bill Clinton's assistant secretary of state for human rights from 1998 to 2001. Diplomatic

Is invoking "international opinion" in American law "like subjecting legislation enacted by Congress to review by the United Nations"?

work runs in Koh's family: during the 1950s his father was South Korea's minister to the United States. (The family chose to stay in this country after a 1961 coup.)

Harold Koh loved his work as a Clinton-era diplomat but came to hate some of the American practices he was asked to defend—especially capital punishment. He felt that the death penalty alienated U.S. allies in Europe and Latin America and gave countries in the Middle East and Asia an excuse to ignore American entreaties to improve their human-rights records. Since his term in the State Department ended, Koh has attacked the death penalty as antithetical to American foreign-policy interests, most recently in an amicus curiae brief in *Roper*. If the United States isn't keeping pace with the rest of the civilized world, Koh argues, then for its own good it needs to change.

One of the leading opponents of comparativism is John Yoo—a former student of Koh's who is now a law professor at the University of California at

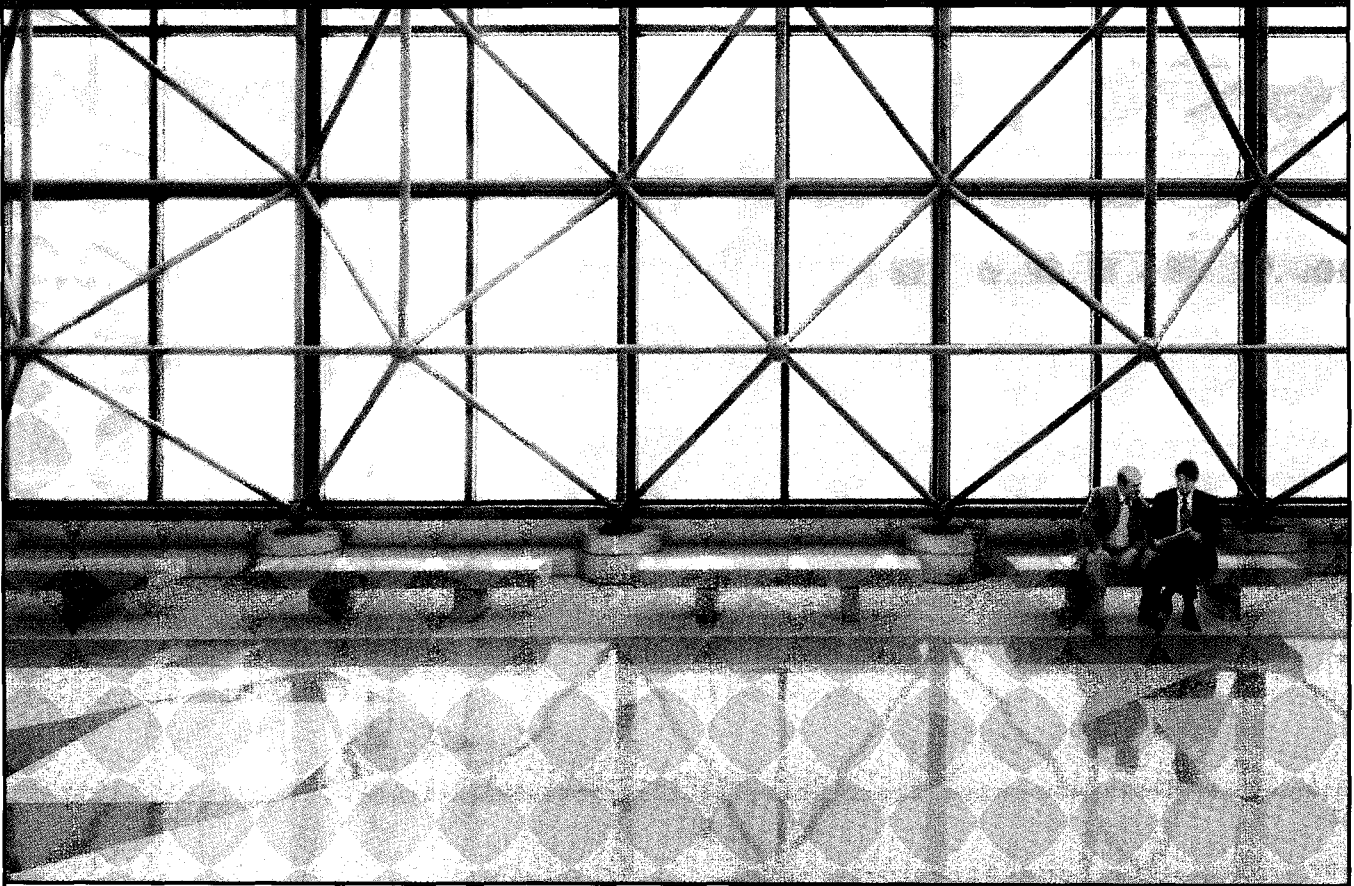
Berkeley. Like Koh, Yoo is of Korean descent; he immigrated to the United States as a child. He took three of Koh's classes at Yale Law School from 1989 to 1992, when Koh was a young professor; he also worked for Koh as a teaching assistant and co-authored a paper about international economic power with him. "I wouldn't be where I am without Harold, without his guidance and support," Yoo told me. Yet Yoo never shared Koh's embrace of international law. His early major academic articles attacked Koh's theories, and he has continued to write skeptically about the delegation of authority to international institutions. In 2001 Yoo went to work for George W. Bush, becoming, along with Koh, one of only three Korean-Americans ever to win a high-level appointment in a U.S. administration. As a deputy assistant attorney general in John Ashcroft's Justice Department, Yoo wrote the memo-

randum that stripped foreign detainees at Guantánamo Bay and in Afghanistan of the protections of the Geneva Convention, and he co-authored the notorious "torture memo" that justified the administration's authorization of extreme interrogation tactics.

Yoo says he was simply giving the government, as his client, "a good sense of the lines that the law draws." But Koh found Yoo's actions unforgivable. "If a client asks a lawyer how to break the law and escape liability," he said before the Senate Judiciary Committee during the confirmation hearings for Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, "the lawyer's ethical duty is to say no." Backed by more than 200 law professors and lawyers who expressed similar sentiments in a public statement, Koh called the torture memo "perhaps the most clearly erroneous legal opinion I have ever read."

Yoo says he and Koh have not spoken for some time. In print, however, they continue to clash over the questions raised by *Roper* and *Lawrence*.

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THE ROCKY ROAD TO SAINTHOOD

Saints may hold a place in heaven, but the process of attaining sainthood—beatification and then canonization—is rarely safe from controversy. Even as the speedy beatification process for Pope John Paul II is celebrated worldwide, some critics question whether the Vatican is moving too fast. Others suggest that the process has been unduly influenced by conservative religious groups eager to enshrine his policies. As the pope who made more saints than all his predecessors combined, John Paul II was acquainted with saintly controversy. Below, a sampling of religious figures and their pit stops in the purgatory of dissension. —TYLER CABOT

1. Oscar Romero. The archbishop of San Salvador and a champion of human rights, Romero was murdered—reportedly by a right-wing assassin—while celebrating mass in 1980. Fearful of the political implications of putting a suspected Marxist on the path to sainthood, the Vatican delayed his beatification for a quarter century before finally beginning proceedings on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death, earlier this year.

2. Emperor Charles I. The last ruler of the Austrian Empire, Charles I was supposedly the only monarch to push in earnest for a peaceful end to World War I. He also condoned the use of poison gas by his army, which killed 40,000 Italians in a single attack in 1917. Though opposition groups called him a feeble, alcoholic murderer, John Paul II beatified him, calling him a “man of peace.”

3. Anne Catherine Emmerich. A German nun who died in 1824, Emmerich had visions of the Crucifixion—often interpreted as anti-Semitic—that served as an inspiration for Mel Gibson’s film *The Passion of the Christ*. Though Emmerich’s beatification stalled in 1892, when the Vatican began to doubt the authenticity of her visions, Gibson’s film helped push her back into the spotlight. Despite fervent criticism from some Jewish groups, she, too, was beatified in 2004.

4. Pius IX. Venerated by Church conservatives for formulating the doctrines of papal infallibility and the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Pius Nono was also openly anti-Semitic:



he confined Roman Jews to the ghetto, stripped them of all property rights, and reportedly referred to them as “dogs.” Some Church scholars believe that his beatification, in 2000, was payback against critics of one of his successors, Pius XII, whose own beatification was delayed by allegations that he had failed to condemn the Holocaust.

5. Jan Sarkander. Tarred, stretched, and executed by his Protestant captors in 1620, during the Thirty Years War, the Polish-born priest was canonized in 1995 as a martyr for his faith. Many Czech Protestants saw him differently: historically accused of encouraging an invasion by Catholic forces from Poland, Sarkander was viewed as a symbol of Catholic intolerance and totalitarianism.

6. José Maria Escriva. Founder of the ultra-conservative, ultra-secretive Opus Dei, Escriva was made a saint in 2002, in near record time—just twenty-seven years after his death. His advocates noted Escriva’s temperance and work to preserve conservative Catholicism, but critics charged the Vatican with playing favorites by fast-tracking him ahead of more-liberal contenders.

7. Queen Isabella. The queen was celebrated by the Church for introducing Catholicism to Latin America through Christopher Columbus and for her efforts to keep Spain Catholic, but a bid to beatify her on the 500th anniversary of her death, last year, was passed over amid controversy regarding her role in the Spanish Inquisition.

8. Padre Pio. Mystic, healer, and all-around miracle worker, Pio was said to bear stigmata, emit “holy” floral odors, and be able to fly—such as when he swooped through the air to rescue a downed Italian pilot during World War II. Despite questions raised by two papal emissaries—and despite reported evidence that he raised money for right-wing religious groups and had sex with penitents—Pio was canonized in 2002.

Because foreign judges “are not responsible to the American political system,” Yoo argues in an essay that will be published in the *Hawaii Law Review*, relying on their decisions is at odds with the Constitution. Viewed through this lens, invoking what Kennedy referred to in *Roper* as “the overwhelming weight of international opinion” is an end run around American democracy. Richard Posner, a federal-appeals-court judge and a law professor at the University of Chicago, agrees. “Such nose-counting is like subjecting legislation enacted by Congress to review by the United Nations General Assembly,” he wrote last year in the magazine *Legal Affairs*.

To Koh, on the other hand, it is the job of the courts to bring Congress and the states to heel. “It’s very basic in the Bill of Rights,” he says. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, whether the majority agrees with them or not. Rights are in some sense anti-democratic; to trumpet democracy as the all-important value is to denigrate them.”

The strongest argument against comparativism is a matter of practice, not principle. Those who draw on foreign laws and precedents tend to use them selectively, when it suits their purposes. This makes their opponents cry foul. “We are one of only six countries in the world that allows abortion on demand at any time prior to viability,” Scalia said to Breyer in their American University debate. “Should we change that because other countries feel differently?”

If comparativism continues to gather momentum, as seems likely, Scalia’s question may be taken up in earnest. “The first opposition strategy is to argue that these materials are illegitimate,” says Mark Tushnet, a professor of law at Georgetown University. “But if you lose that battle, then you start citing them yourself.” A victory for comparativism could have conservative judges citing international precedents that support their own arguments—laws, say, that restrict abortion in Germany and Ireland, or limit free speech in Canada. That would be the foreign-law version of “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.” ■

Emily Bazelon is a senior editor at Slate and a Soros Media Justice fellow.



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Declare War

It's time to stop slipping into armed conflict

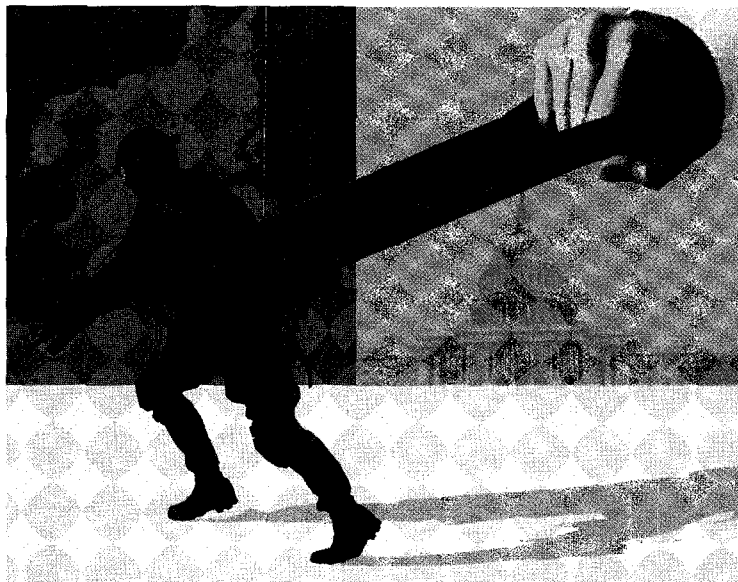
BY LESLIE H. GELB AND ANNE-MARIE SLAUGHTER

Most wars are unpredictable messes. Their zigs and zags, we are reminded by the Pentagon epistemologist Donald Rumsfeld, are determined by an unstable alchemy of known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns. No nation can plan a war perfectly. Yet in Iraq even the most credulous of Washington insiders had to know before our 2003 invasion that key White House assertions—we could pay for the war out of Iraqi oil revenues; we could secure that vast and raucous country with a little over 100,000 troops—flatly contradicted what almost all civilian and military experts were saying publicly and privately. Much that has gone wrong in Iraq could have been foreseen—and was.

But Iraq is only the latest in a long line of ill-considered and ill-planned American military adventures. Time and again in recent decades the United States has made military commitments after little real debate, with hazy goals and no appetite for the inevitable setbacks. Bill Clinton, having inherited a mission in Somalia to feed the starving, ended up hunting tribal leaders and trying to nation-build. Ronald Reagan dispatched the Marines to Lebanon saying stability there was a “vital interest,” only to yank them out sixteen months later, soon after a deadly terrorist attack on the Marine barracks. John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson settled us slowly into a war intended to prevent another “domino” from falling to communism, but in a manner that tore the nation apart and ultimately led to defeat. Too often our

leaders have entered wars with unclear and unfixed aims, tossing away American lives, power, and credibility before figuring out what they were doing and what could be done.

Our Framers could not have foreseen the present age of nuclear missiles and cataclysmic terrorism. But they understood political accountability, and—as their deliberations in Phila-



delphia attest—they knew that sending Americans into battle demanded careful reflection and vigorous debate. So they created a simple means of ensuring that debate: in Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution they gave Congress the power to declare war.

Declarations of war may seem to be relics of a bygone era—a time more deeply steeped in ritual, when ambassadors in frock coats delivered sealed communiqués to foreign courts. Yet a declaration of war has a great deal to recommend it today: it forces a deliberate, public conversation about the reasons for going to war, the costs, the risks, the likely gains, the strategies for achieving them—all followed by a formal vote.

Debates over war powers are noth-

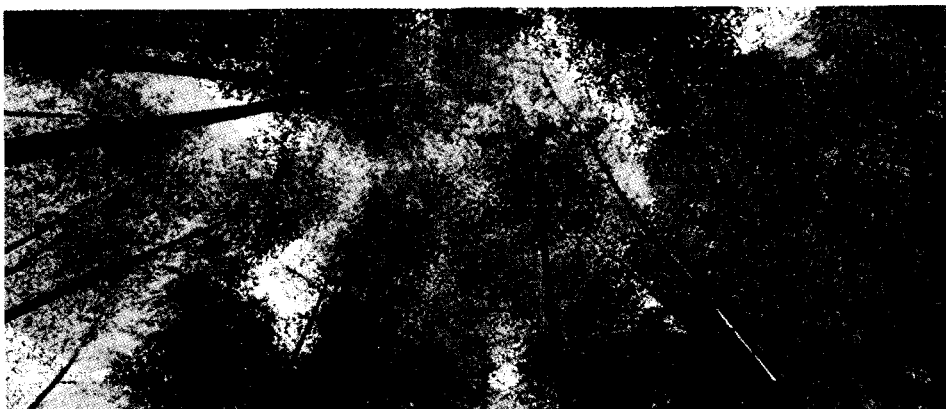
ing new. A recent book by the University of California at San Diego political scientist Peter Irons, *War Powers*, concludes that although the president has steadily accumulated de facto war powers, the Framers clearly—and correctly—intended to locate those powers in Congress. A report issued this year by the Constitution Project, a group of eminent academics and policymakers assembled by Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute, sounds the same note. For these experts and countless other lawyers and constitutional scholars, the solution is for Congress to step up and reassume primary responsibility for sending the nation to war.

The problem is that Congress wants

power without responsibility. Most legislators fear the political costs of bucking the commander in chief when the nation appears under threat. Others worry that the president's control of vital intelligence places him in a far better position to judge the need for war. The obvious answer is to demand that the information be shared, but here the president can claim that a debate risks spilling secrets to the enemy.

As a result, Congress has often preferred form over substance. Early in the history of the Republic, when President James Madison asked for a declaration of war against Algiers to stop the Barbary pirates, Congress declined, but authorized him to use “such of the armed vessels of the United States as may be judged requisite.” Over time such authorizations have become fast tracks to war. Congress votes up or down on the president's often vague military proposals, without accepting responsibility for judging the objectives of the war and the plans for waging it.

In the wake of the Vietnam War, Congress tried to fix this problem by passing the War Powers Act, which states that troops sent into combat by the president must be withdrawn within



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sixty days unless Congress specifically approves an extension of combat. Trouble began immediately. Richard Nixon vetoed the act; when Congress overrode the veto, he simply reaffirmed his right to go ahead with war regardless of what Congress said. But Nixon's concerns were unwarranted: the War Powers Act was much more a symbolic assertion of congressional power than an actual constraint on the executive. It is naive to believe that any Congress would vote to pull back troops just sixty days after they'd been deployed.

The War Powers Act was a halfhearted effort to counter presidential unilateralism. The Framers imagined a more solemn act—a formal congressional process and declaration that would be far more difficult for the president to ignore. We propose a new law that would restore the Framers' intent by requiring a congressional declaration of war in advance of any commitment of troops that promises sustained combat. The president would be required to present to Congress an analysis of the threat, specific war aims, the rationale for those aims, the feasibility of achieving them, a general

But if he planned to keep troops there to unseat the government and transform the country, he would need a congressional declaration. (Without one, funding for troops in the field would be cut off automatically.)

This process would put considerable pressure on the president to develop his case with far greater care than has been the norm over the past fifty years. And by normally requiring legislators to act before troops are in the field, it would also help save them from a natural propensity to duck their constitutional duty.

Passing this legislation might not be easy. But the time is right. Liberals and conservatives alike have become increasingly concerned about the carelessness and costs of wars over the past forty years. A law that established a clear and solemn process for taking the nation to war, while acknowledging the joint responsibility of Congress and the president, could command broad support—especially if it were framed as a return to our constitutional roots. Moderates and liberals would presumably go along. The bill would satisfy their concerns about how easily the United States has gone to war, with subsequent regrets about either the war itself or how it was fought.

But in the wake of the Iraq War such a law might also appeal to many conservatives and neo-conservatives—particularly those who

have come to feel that the United States is not getting the foreign-policy results it should, despite its awesome military power. Since the Vietnam War, hawks have felt that we tend to lose wars not on the battlefield but at home. The public, they correctly argue, becomes disenchanted with combat as casualties and costs mount, particularly if no steady progress toward victory can be seen. Demands to bring the troops home begin. The enemy becomes emboldened, and we begin to lose—first psychologically and then literally.

But a more public vetting of the decision to go to war, culminating in a solemn declaration of war by Congress, would most likely ensure stronger pub-

lic support for the war, by involving the people in the decision and assuring voters that the war had not been launched hastily or under false pretenses. Setbacks and sacrifices might be less surprising and more easily accepted. Because the declaration process would address problems beforehand, it would help us win wars once they started.

The process and the declaration itself would strengthen American credibility—and negotiating power—in the diplomatic run-up to war. Troublemakers abroad have seen the pressure that our government feels to cut and run when conflict turns ugly. Beyond that, many have doubted that the White House would follow through on its threats at all. Saddam Hussein apparently didn't think either President Bush would have the support to attack him. Nor did the Haitians think President Clinton had the stomach for war after he precipitately yanked U.S. troops out of Somalia. But if a president ran the declaration gauntlet and built public support, he would gain enormous credibility for his threats.

And in those cases where the president was unable to persuade Congress to make war, the United States would almost always be better off. The legislation we propose would not diminish the president's considerable stature as commander in chief as he made his case to Congress. If his arguments still failed, the case could not have been very compelling. Far better if we knew that before the killing began.

Today a transportation bill gets more deliberation than a decision to send American troops to war. It seems safe to assume that this is not what the Framers intended. They worked hard to ensure that the power to spend American lives and treasure be exercised collectively and wisely. Their solution is written into the Constitution itself. Returning to the Constitution's text and making it work through legislation requiring joint and deliberate action may be the only way to give the decision to go to war the care it deserves. ▀

Leslie H. Gelb is the president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations. Anne-Marie Slaughter is the dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of International and Public Affairs.

Today a transportation bill gets more deliberation than a decision to send American troops to war.

sense of war strategy, plans for action, and potential costs. For its part, Congress would hold hearings of officials and nongovernmental experts, examine evidence of the threat, assess the objectives, and explore the drawbacks of the administration's proposal. A full floor debate and vote would follow.

In the case of a sudden attack on the United States or on Americans abroad, the president would retain his power to repel that attack and to strike back without a congressional declaration. But any sustained operation would trigger the declaration process. In other words, the president could send troops into Afghanistan to hunt down al-Qaeda and punish the Taliban in response to 9/11.

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Post-Gaza Israel; the travails of black cabbies; the (continuing) migration of the Electoral College; how to spot a spy

SECURITY

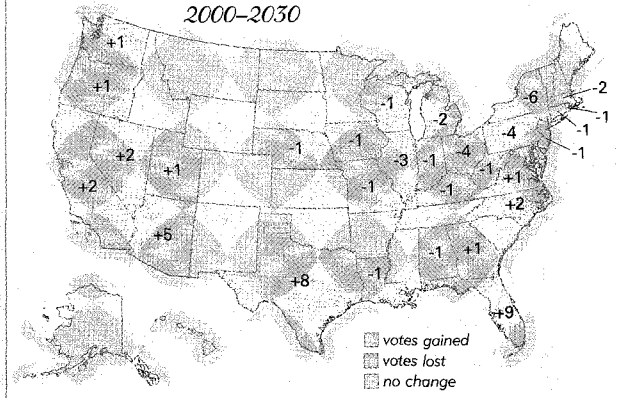
To Fink or Not to Fink?

Having found in 2003 that government workers tend to under-report possible security breaches by their colleagues, in part because of confusion over what constitutes suspicious behavior, the Pentagon's Defense Personnel Security Research Center (PERSEREC) recently compiled a list of activities that should be reported. Some are obvious: "operating unauthorized cameras, recording devices, computers, or modems in areas where classified data are stored"; having "contact with an individual who is known to be, or is suspected of being, associated with a foreign intelligence, security, or terrorist organization." Others suggest that merely working too hard can get you into trouble: PERSEREC recommends keeping a weather eye on colleagues who do "repeated or un-required work outside of normal duty hours" or frequently volunteer "for assignments or duties beyond the normal scope of responsibilities." The call for vigilance appears to be timely: a separate PERSEREC report found that for a number of reasons, government workers are more prone to "insider espionage" than they were in the past. International travel, debt, and gambling are all on the rise among Americans, while "organizational loyalty" is down. The number of foreign-born workers with security clearances in the Defense Department has

increased over the past ten years, even as the overall number of security clearances issued has decreased. This is significant, the report warns, because many employees born elsewhere have "emotional ties to a foreign country, or to family or friends in a foreign country," and they may also take a "holistic view of world affairs" that could lead them to believe espionage is "morally justifiable."

—"Reporting of Counterintelligence and Security Indicators by Supervisors and Coworkers," S. Wood, K. Crawford, and E. Lang, PERSEREC; "Technological, Social, and Economic Trends That Are Increasing U.S. Vulnerability to Insider Espionage," L. Kramer, R. Heuer, and K. Crawford, PERSEREC

PROJECTED ELECTORAL COLLEGE CHANGE 2000-2030



POLITICS

The Purpling of America

As has been well documented, migration from the Northeast and Midwest to the Sun Belt has changed the makeup of the Electoral College dramatically over the past three decades. According to a paper from the Brookings Institution, even more change is likely in the next quarter century. The largest gains in political influence, the paper predicts, will go to the so-called purple states—those, such as Florida and Nevada, that are not strongly red or blue (both went for Bush in the 2004 election, but not by much), and thus are increasingly up for grabs.

—"The Electoral College Moves to the Sun Belt," William Frey, Brookings Institution

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Next Year in Jerusalem

As Israel disentangles itself from the Gaza Strip, a report from the International Crisis Group argues that Jerusalem is still the region's real "powder keg," and that Israeli policies there could jeopardize any hope of a lasting peace. Jewish control over the city has been growing for decades, but, the report argues, the government is now "implementing a more focused and systematic plan" aimed at "choking off" Arab East Jerusalem. In particular, the report cites the barrier being constructed between Israeli territory and the West Bank, which will leave 200,000 Palestinian residents of municipal Jerusalem on the Israeli side once it is finished, making the city a likely flashpoint for violence. The Israeli expansion is especially damaging to the region's security, the report

adds, because it undermines the credibility of the Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, and others pursuing a diplomatic solution, thus playing into the hands of Hamas and other violent groups.

—"The Jerusalem Powder Keg," International Crisis Group

SOCIETY

Of Tips and Taxis

It's often asserted that cabdrivers avoid picking up African-American riders; now a study suggests that black cabbies, too, are the victims of discrimination. According to a study in the *Yale Law Journal*, African-American cabdrivers collect on average about one third less in tips than white drivers. Passengers are more likely to "round up" a tip when the driver is Caucasian, and black drivers are 80 percent more likely than white drivers to be completely stiffed. African-American passengers are just as likely as white passengers to undertip black drivers, and minorities in general appear to be terrible tippers. The researchers note that they were unable to control for passenger income, and that a higher rate of "passenger poverty" among minorities might help explain their tipping habits. They also postulate that the propensity of blacks to give low tips—rather than racial animus or a fear of being robbed—may be what makes some cabbies reluctant to pick them up.

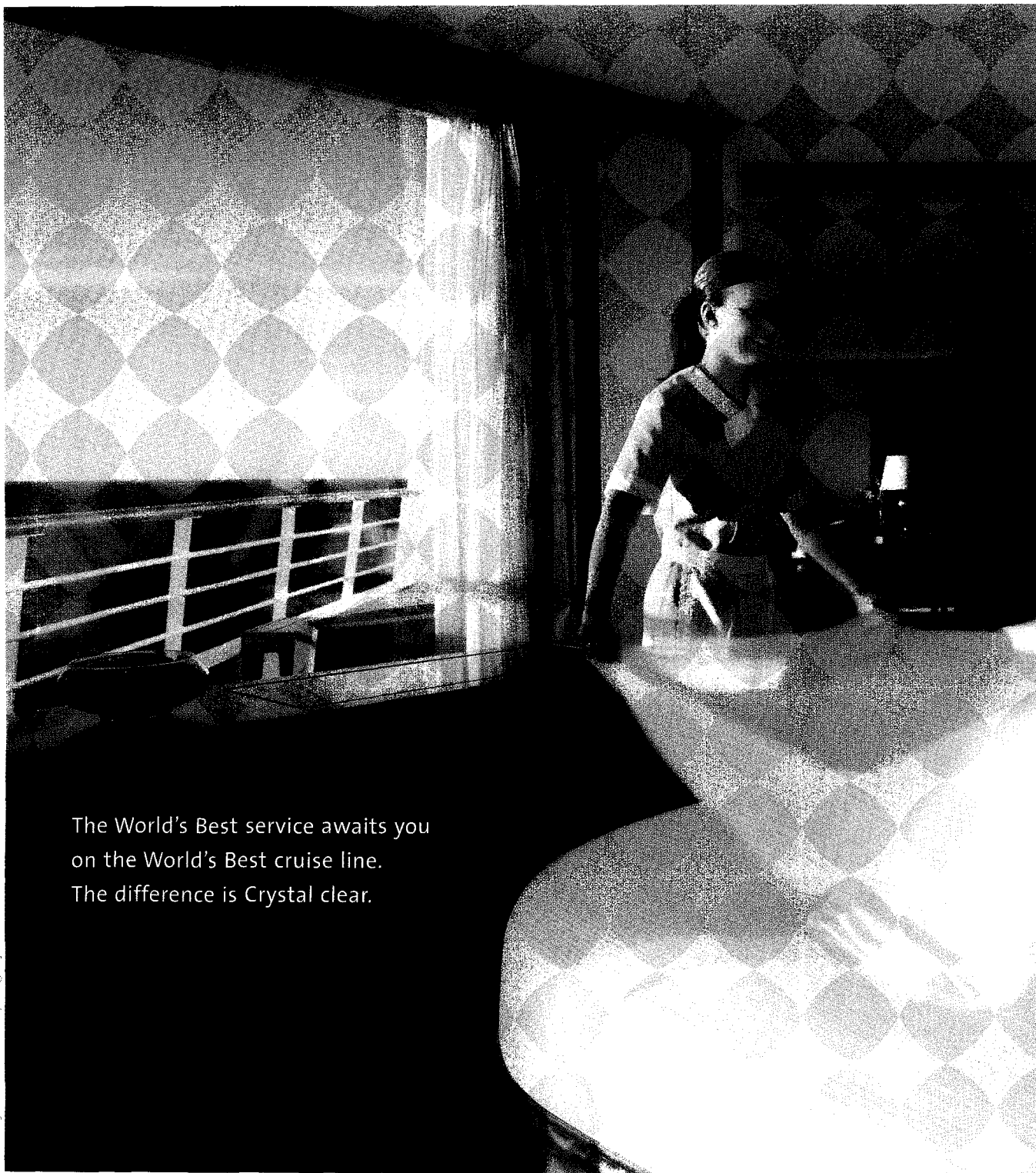
—"To Insure Prejudice: Racial Disparities in Taxicab Tipping," I. Ayres, F. Vars, and N. Zakariya, *Yale Law Journal*

Compiled by Ross Douhat, Marshall Poe, and Terrence Henry. For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200511/primarysources



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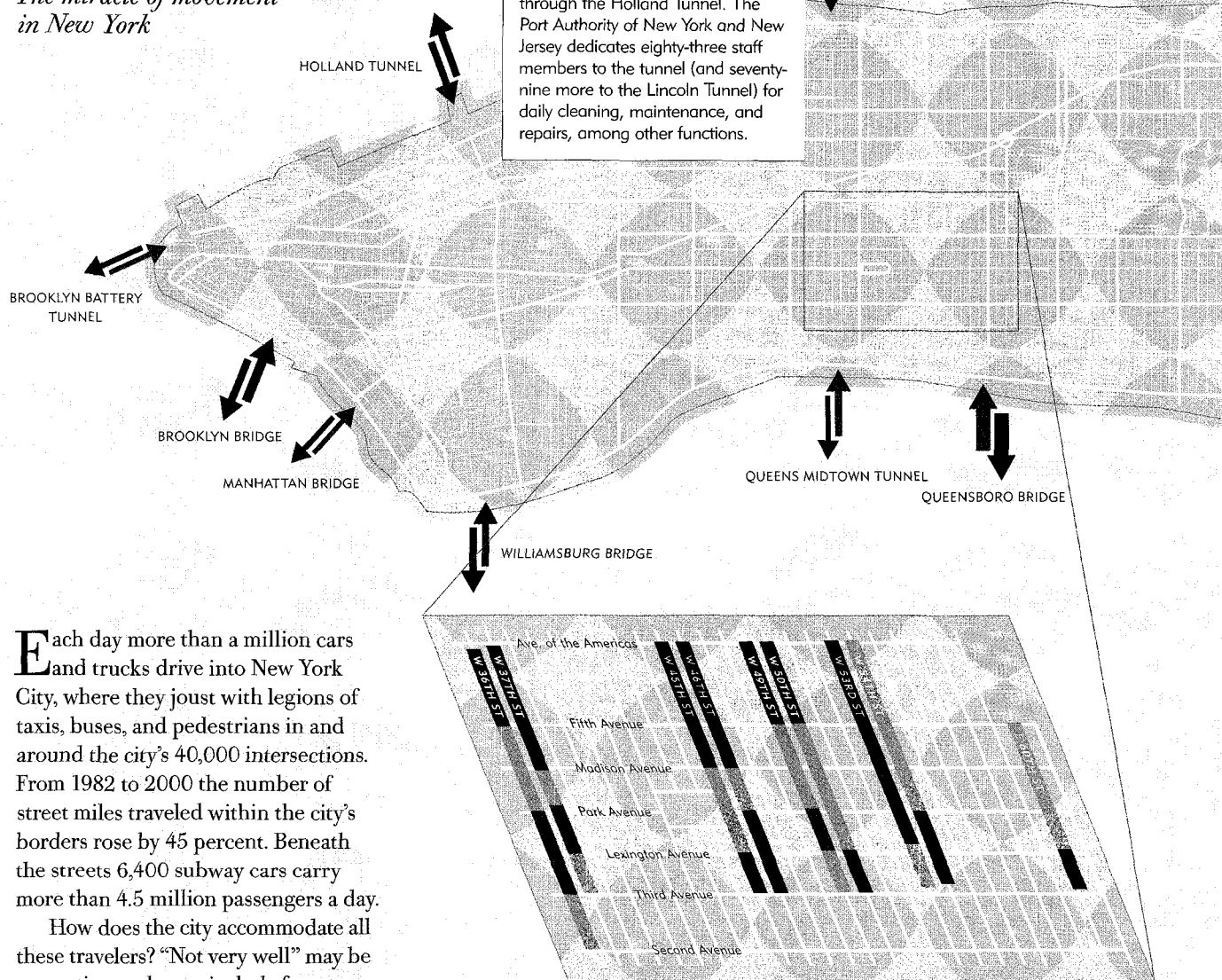
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Stop and Go

The miracle of movement in New York



Each day more than a million cars and trucks drive into New York City, where they joust with legions of taxis, buses, and pedestrians in and around the city's 40,000 intersections. From 1982 to 2000 the number of street miles traveled within the city's borders rose by 45 percent. Beneath the streets 6,400 subway cars carry more than 4.5 million passengers a day.

How does the city accommodate all these travelers? "Not very well" may be a tempting reply, particularly for anyone who's spent much time in a Manhattan taxi. Midtown traffic heading east inches along at an average of 4.8 miles an hour; heading west it's a bit slower—4.2 miles an hour. "Rush hour"—as defined by the city—now stretches to seven or eight hours a day, up from roughly 3.4 hours twenty years ago.

But considering the density of vehicular and foot traffic in New York, it's somewhat miraculous that anything moves at all. That it does is a testament to the city's large and mostly hidden transportation infrastructure. Traffic lights are choreographed by the Traffic Management Center, a division of the Department of Transportation. Its fifteen computers monitor traffic

INCHING ACROSS TOWN

In 2002 high traffic volumes prompted the city to designate several crosstown "thru streets," on which most turns are prohibited during the busiest parts of the day. Average block-by-block speeds on these streets are shown above.

■ 7.0–8.9 mph ■ 5.0–6.9 mph ■ 4.0–4.9 mph ■ 3.0–3.9 mph

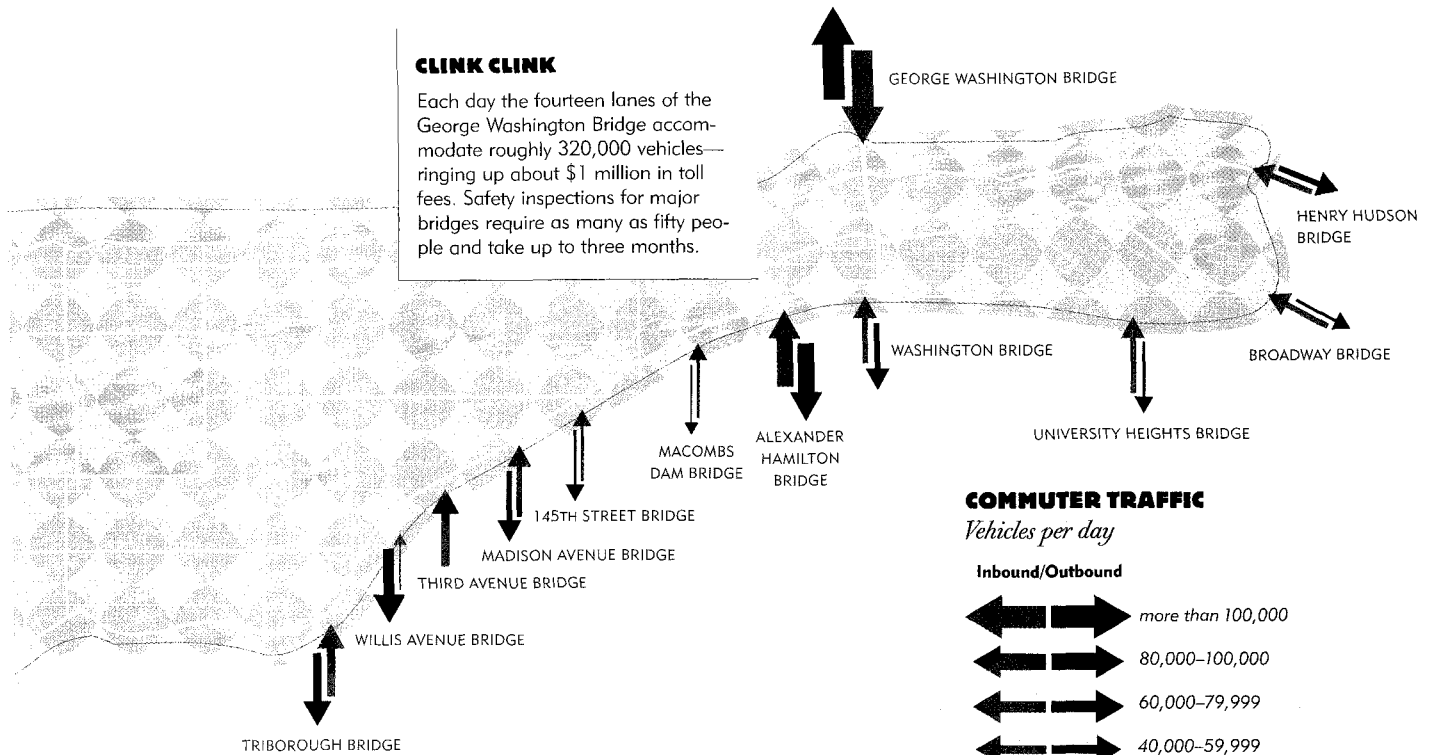
data collected by magnetic detectors embedded in the city's streets. Hundreds of cameras provide a visual complement for the center's engineers, who can change traffic-light patterns and pedestrian-crossing intervals immediately in response to accumulations of vehicles or people.

Technology and planning have made New York's street system both more complex and more orderly than

at any other time in the city's history. Drawing on continual study of shifting traffic patterns, the city regularly remodels its intersections to ensure a smoother flow and to suit local conditions. For instance, pedestrian fencing, pedestrian bridges, and other "traffic calming" measures are introduced at intersections that are becoming clogged or chaotic. Blinking "Don't walk" signals—usually programmed to accom-

CLINK CLINK

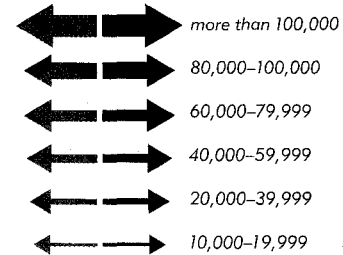
Each day the fourteen lanes of the George Washington Bridge accommodate roughly 320,000 vehicles—ringing up about \$1 million in toll fees. Safety inspections for major bridges require as many as fifty people and take up to three months.



COMMUTER TRAFFIC

Vehicles per day

Inbound/Outbound



moderate a walking speed of four feet per second—are adjusted where the very young or the elderly tend to congregate.

New York's subway cars fairly zip along at speeds of 15 to 25 miles an hour. The subway's 842 miles of track would stretch to Chicago. The 1.8 billion kilowatt-hours required to power the system each year could light the city of Buffalo for the same duration.

Keeping the tracks dry is crucial to the smooth running of the system; each day 309 pump plants—with a total of 748 pumps—remove up to 13 million gallons of rain and other water.

Although New York's subway carries fewer passengers than Tokyo's, Moscow's, Seoul's, or Mexico City's, it dwarfs even its largest competitors in number of cars and number of stations.

With 45,600 employees, represented by twenty-five unions, it is one of the world's most complex subway systems. And of course, in the city that never sleeps, it never stops running; no other major city boasts service all night long. —KATE ASCHER

Text and graphics for this article have been adapted from Kate Ascher's book The Works: Anatomy of a City, to be published this month by the Penguin Press.

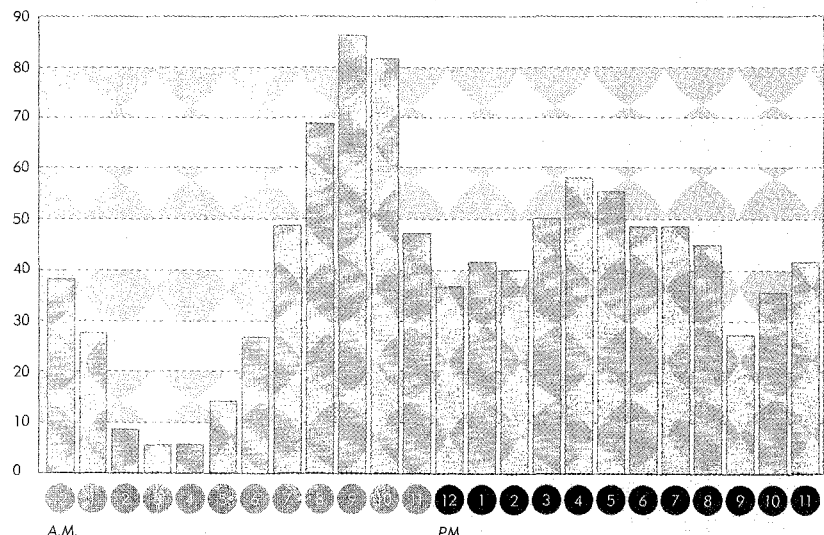
WHAT LIES BENEATH

The scale of New York's subway

	Moscow	Tokyo	New York	London
Passengers per year	3.2 billion	2.7 billion	1.4 billion	886 million
Miles of routes	164.8	181	230	253
Number of stations	165	276	468	275
Number of cars	1,800	3,609	6,400	3,954
Hours of operation	6 A.M.–1 A.M.	5 A.M.–12:15 A.M.	24 hours	5 A.M.–1 A.M.

CROWD CONTROL

People per subway car per hour



THE WRATH OF KHAN

*How A. Q. Khan made Pakistan a nuclear power—
and showed that the spread of atomic weapons can't be stopped*

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

Photo illustrations by John Ritter

.....

Rawalpindi is a city of two million residents on the northern plains of the Punjab, in Pakistan. It is a teeming place, choked with smoke and overcrowded with people just barely getting by. A large number of them live hand to mouth on the equivalent of a few hundred dollars a year. Much of their drinking water comes from a lake in the peaceful countryside north of town. The lake is surrounded by tree-lined pastures and patches of sparse forest. The navy of Pakistan has a sailing club there, on a promontory with a cinder-block shack, a dock, and one small sloop in the water—a Laser 16 with dirty sails, which sees little use. Though fishermen and picnickers sometimes appear in the afternoons or evenings, the lakefront on both sides of the promontory is pristine and undeveloped. The emptiness is by design: though the land around the lake is privately owned, zoning laws strictly forbid construction there, in order to protect Rawalpindi's citizens from the contamination that would otherwise result. This seems only right. If Pakistan can do nothing else for its people, it can at least prevent the rich from draining their sewage into the water of the poor.

But Pakistan is a country corrupted to its core, and some years ago a large weekend house was built in blatant disregard of the law, about a mile from the navy's sailing club, clearly in sight on the lake's far shore. When ordinary people build illegal houses in Pakistan, the government's response is unambiguous and swift: backed by soldiers or the police, bulldozers come in and knock the structures down. But the builder of this house was none other than Dr. Abdul Quadeer Khan, the metallurgist who after a stint in Europe had returned to Pakistan in the mid-1970s with stolen designs, and over the years had provided the country—single-handedly, it was widely believed—with an arsenal of nuclear weapons. Though he worked in the realm of state secrets, Khan had become something of a demigod in Pakistan, with a public reputation second only to that of the nation's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and he had developed an ego to match. He was the head of a government facility named after

him—the Khan Research Laboratories, or KRL—which had mastered the difficult process of producing highly enriched uranium, the fissionable material necessary for Pakistan's weapons, and was also involved in the design of the warheads and the missiles to deliver them. The enemy was India, where Khan, like most Pakistanis of his generation, had been born, and against which Pakistan has fought four losing wars since its birth, in 1947. India had the bomb, and now Pakistan did too. A. Q. Khan was seen to have assured the nation's survival, and indeed he probably has—up until the moment, someday in a conceivable future, when a nuclear exchange actually occurs.

In any case, by the time he built the house on the lake, he believed wholeheartedly in his own greatness. In his middle age he had become a fleshy, banquet-fed man, unused to criticism and outrageously self-satisfied. Accompanied by his security detail, he would go around Pakistan accepting awards and words of praise, passing out pictures of himself, and holding forth on diverse subjects—science, education, health, history, world politics, poetry, and (his favorite) the magnitude of his achievements. As befits such a benefactor, he would also give out money, of which he seemed to have an unlimited supply, despite the fact that he was a government official with a government official's salary and no other obvious means of wealth; he bought houses for his friends, funded scholarships, set up his own private charity, made large donations to mosques, and bestowed grants on Pakistani schools and institutions, many of which duly named themselves or their buildings after him. To understand Khan correctly—which to some degree is to understand the spread of nuclear arsenals beyond the traditional great powers—it is necessary to recognize that his largesse was not merely a matter of self-aggrandizement. He has been portrayed in the West as a twisted character, an evil scientist, a purveyor of death. He had certainly lost perspective on himself. But the truth is that he was a good

husband and father and friend, and he gave large gifts because in essence he was an openhearted and charitable man.

*William Langewiesche
is a national correspondent
for The Atlantic.*



As to why, therefore, he insisted on building a weekend house that drained into Rawalpindi's drinking water, the answer is indeed twisted, though in a standard Pakistani way: the attraction was not in the setting on the lake (there are prettier lakes nearby) but, rather, in the open defiance of the law—an opportunity for the display of personal power. In a country whose courts have been made captive, and whose most fundamental laws have been systematically ignored by corrupt civilian governments and successive military regimes, once wealth has been achieved there can be no more gratifying display of success than such a brazen act of illegality. Khan's house on the lake served as a barely coded message, and one that was universally understood by Pakistanis at the time. It was a public brag. People did not disapprove of Khan for what he had done. Even in Rawalpindi they tended rather to admire him for it. It remained illegal to build on the lake, and as a result, by twisted logic, the restricted property there became some of the most sought after in the region. A. Q. Khan had pioneered the ground. Within a few years other houses had been built near his, perhaps a dozen in all, and each for the same reason—because of the extraordinary influence it took to get away with such a public crime. Some of the builders were generals. Some were Khan's associates from the secret laboratory. All of them derived additional glory from their proximity to the beloved Khan.

Then for Khan, in January of 2004, the good life came crashing down. He was sixty-eight at the time. U.S. agents had intercepted a German ship named the *BBC China* carrying parts for a Libyan nuclear-weapons-production program, and Libya, in subsequently renouncing its nuclear ambitions, had named Pakistan, and particularly the Khan Research Laboratories, as the supplier of what was to be a complete store-bought nuclear-weapons program. The price tag was said to be \$100 million. At about the same time, it was revealed that the Pakistani-run network had provided information and nuclear-weapons components to Iran and North Korea, and had begun negotiations with a fourth country, perhaps Syria or Saudi Arabia. The current dictator of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, denied any personal knowledge or governmental involvement, and with his masters in Washington, D.C., looking sternly on, accused Khan of running a rogue operation, outside the law. It was theater of the diplomatic kind. But Musharraf was an unconvincing actor. In the context of Pakistan he might as well have expressed surprise that Khan had built a house on the shores of a drinking-water supply.

Khan's top lieutenants had already been detained. Now Khan himself was arrested—taken away by plainclothes security agents who came in the night and drove him to a secret location for a few days of questioning and persuasion. An agreement was reached, and on February 4, 2004, in a stage-managed event, Khan appeared on television and made a public confession, in which he apologized to the

nation and absolved the military regime of involvement. Musharraf called Khan a national hero for his earlier work, and then pardoned him and confined him to house arrest at his grand Los Angeles-style residence in the nation's tightly controlled capital, Islamabad, a short drive north of Rawalpindi. Khan has been there ever since, in isolation with his European wife, surrounded by guards and security agents, cut off from contact with the outside world, not allowed to read the newspapers or watch television, let alone to use the telephone or the Internet, and held beyond the reach of even the intelligence services of the United States. The intelligence services would like to debrief him, because

The Libyans named Pakistan, and the Khan Research Laboratories in particular, as the supplier of what was to be a complete store-bought nuclear-weapons program. Other clients were Iran and North Korea.

of the likelihood that much of the network he established remains alive worldwide, and that by its very nature—loose, unstructured, technically specialized, determinedly amoral—it is both resilient and mutable, and can resume its activities when the opportunity arises, as inevitably it will. Pakistan has mounted its own investigation, and is parceling out some information to the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, in Vienna. But for obvious reasons the Pakistani regime cannot allow deep scrutiny to occur, and neither, out of perceived geopolitical necessity, can the current leaders of the United States.

Khan therefore remains an enigma—a man who may die in isolation, still carrying his secrets with him. Some news does filter out about the conditions of his captivity. He has aged considerably, and has lost weight and sickened, but apparently he is not being poisoned. After decades of soft living he suffers from various physical ailments, including constipation and, more significant, chronic high blood pressure, which led last summer to a brief hospitalization. He is also deeply despondent—convinced that he served his nation honorably, and that even as he transferred its nuclear secrets to other countries, he was acting on behalf of Pakistan, and with the complicity of its military rulers. He sleeps poorly at night. Last spring he managed to slip a note out to one of his former lieutenants. It was a scribbled lament in which he asked about General Musharraf, "Why is this boy doing this to me?" The answer seems obvious: it is a requirement for maintaining power. Ordinary Pakistanis remain on Khan's side. But out of self-protection the elites must turn away from him now.

Even his longtime scribe, a journalist named Zahid Malik, who for years praised Khan in public, and published an ador-

ing biography of him in 1992, told me recently that Khan's arrest was necessary. We met in Malik's Islamabad office, at the newspaper he founded, called the *Pakistan Observer*. He emphasized his loyalty to the military regime. He said, "After 9/11 Pakistan has emerged as a trusted and responsible ally of the West. Pakistan has adopted a principled position, you see, of working against terrorism, extremism, al-Qaeda, and all that. When Pakistan came to know of certain complaints, Pakistan reacted, you see, and very forcefully. Because as President Musharraf has been saying, and rightly so, whatever Dr. Khan did was his personal act."

He also said that Musharraf is rooting out corruption.

Since we were on the subject of law, I asked him what he knew about the formal basis for Khan's continuing detention. He did not directly answer. He said, "The government says it is because of his security. His own safety."

I asked, "Do you believe that yourself? That it's in his interest to be confined?"

Malik did not hesitate. Almost eagerly he said, "I think so, I think so."

It pays in Pakistan to be politically realistic. Khan's days on the lake are over, but other people are still out there building or expanding their houses. The most noticeable place is next door to Khan's. It is under construction, and showy in the style of an international hotel. Khan's house by comparison seems modest now, all the more so because it is shuttered and abandoned. Even on sun-filled days there is a sadness to the scene; in the afternoons when the wind comes up, there is nonetheless a stillness. Khan's garden, which slopes to the shore and was once his pride, is growing wild. He has a little speedboat beside a private dock, but it is open to the rain and is slowly swamping, settling nose-down into the water.

Khan's personal history is obscured as much by adulation as by secrecy. Something is known of his childhood. He was born in 1936, to a Muslim family in Bhopal, India—a city now known for the 18,000 deaths caused there by an accidental venting, one night in 1984, at a Union Carbide insecticide plant. Bhopal in the 1930s was split between Hindus and Muslims. The two groups lived in wary but peaceful proximity, despite growing sectarian animosity elsewhere on the Subcontinent. Khan was one of seven children. His father was a retired schoolmaster of modest means, with a thin, severe face, a white beard, and a turban. He was a partisan of the Muslim League, and when visiting the bazaar would warn like-minded men of Mahatma Gandhi's craftiness, and his ambition to annihilate the Muslims. These were of course common fears at the time, and they were reflected on the Hindu side as well. After World War II, as Great Britain rushed to withdraw from its burdensome colonial charge, and India's factions deadlocked over a power-sharing arrangement, a partition was

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decided upon that would carve a separate Muslim nation, called Pakistan, from Indian soil. The new nation would itself be split in two, between the Muslim-majority area of the west, primarily along the Indus River, and a smaller Muslim area far to the east, on the delta of the Ganges, in Bengal. It was an awkward exit strategy, but better than trying to control a full-blown civil war. A British official was sent from London, and with no previous expertise in the region, he drew up the boundaries within a few weeks.

Khan by then was a schoolboy, and according to Zahid Malik, he was a perfect one. He was devout, studious, and respectful of his teachers, and for good measure he was also a perfect son. All this and more, Malik believes, had been foretold. He writes that some months after Khan's birth his mother took the infant to a fortune-teller, known as the Maharaj, to look into his future. After performing calculations the Maharaj said, "The birth of this child will bring good fortune to his family. The child is very lucky. He is going to do a lot of good deeds in his life ahead. He will receive two kinds of education."

In 1972 Khan received his Ph.D. in metallurgical engineering, and went to work in Amsterdam for a consulting firm called FDO. It happened to specialize in the design of machines called ultra-centrifuges.

In the book Malik pauses to explain: "Probably the Maharaj referred to the Science of Metallurgy and Nuclear Physics, or perhaps to a local and foreign education system."

The fortune-teller continued, "Up to the age of eight months, he will suffer from stomach pain and a cough, after which he will have a long and healthy life. He will outstand in his family and will be a source of great pride and honor to his parents, brothers, and sisters. He is going to do very important and useful work for his nation and will earn immense respect." Furthermore, "Due to your son's good luck, you will soon be rewarded with great wealth."

But first there were troubles to endure. At the time of the Partition, in 1947, one of the greatest migrations in human history got under way, as over the course of a few months more than 10 million people—Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims—fled the hostility of their old communities and sorted themselves out in the new nations. They moved by train and bus, and on foot. In the absence of governmental power India's social hatreds took form, and the migrants were attacked by mobs. The history is obscure and highly propagandized, but it seems that entire trainloads were massacred on both sides, that rape was rampant, and that several hundred thousand people died. In Pakistan perhaps seven million Muslims arrived, however traumatized.

Abdul Quadeer Khan was not initially among them: his parents chose to remain in Bhopal, where their lives seemed comfortable enough. But the city was no longer really their home, and over the subsequent few years its Muslim residents endured increasing harassment by their Hindu neighbors and the Hindu police. Three of Khan's older brothers and one of his sisters eventually left for Pakistan, and in the summer of 1952, having passed his matriculation exam, A. Q., at the age of sixteen, followed them there. He traveled across India by train, among a group of other Bhopali Muslims who were intimidated and attacked by Hindu railroad officials and the police. Jewelry and money were stolen from his companions, and people were beaten. Khan lost merely a pen, but the bullying marked him for life. The train ride ended at the border town of Mona Bao, beyond which lay a five-mile stretch of barren desert, and Pakistan. Zahid Malik describes Khan's crossing in the style of a founding epic. Carrying his shoes and a few books and belongings, the young A. Q. walked barefoot across the blistering sands to arrive at last in the

Promised Land. He went to live with one of his brothers in Karachi. His mother arrived soon afterward. His father stayed in Bhopal, and died there some years later. Khan enrolled at the D. J. Science College of Karachi, where he excelled.

Pakistan by then was five years old. It was still a democracy, albeit a messy one. It had already fought and lost its first war with India over the disputed territory of Kashmir,

a mountainous and predominantly Muslim region which for complex political reasons went to India at the time of the Partition. Pakistan had drawn the wrong lessons from its battlefield loss. It was born a poor nation and could not afford war, but its people hated India, and its military was on the rise. In 1958, on the pretext of threats to the nation, the army of Pakistan overthrew the democratic government and declared martial law. It is not known how Khan reacted. He was twenty-two, and in his final years in college. He believed, as many Pakistanis still do, that India had never accepted the Subcontinent's partition, and (as he told his friends) that Hindus were tricksters with hegemonic designs. It is possible, therefore, that he accepted the need for firm leadership. In later years he argued publicly against military rule despite the fact that he was providing Pakistan's generals with the ultimate weapon, and with that weapon, increased arrogance and strength. But in 1958 he was still essentially an apolitical young man, intent on studying science.

He graduated from college in 1960, and at the age of twenty-four became an inspector of weights and measures in Karachi. It was the sort of government job that might have lasted a lifetime, but Khan was more ambitious, and he secured the funding to pursue his education abroad. In 1961 he resigned from his job, and flew to West Berlin to

study metallurgical engineering at a technical university there. His German grew fluent. He was lonely for Pakistan, but open to the experience of living in Europe, and to making new friends.

In 1962, while on vacation in The Hague, he met the woman who would become his wife. He had written a postcard home, and when he inquired about the price of a stamp, she was the stranger who happened by with an answer. Her name was Henny. She was a frumpy-looking girl of twenty, in glasses, who had been born in South Africa to Dutch expatriates, and had spent her childhood in Africa before returning with her parents to the Netherlands. She held a British passport, and though she spoke native Dutch, she lived in Holland as a registered foreigner. She and Khan corresponded for a few months, after which she took a job in Berlin to be closer to him. After a year they returned to Holland, where Khan transferred to a university in Delft to continue his studies in metallurgy. In 1963 he and Henny were married in a modest Muslim ceremony at Pakistan's embassy in The Hague. The marriage was performed by an embassy official and witnessed by the ambassador, as a standard service to citizens abroad. There was a small tea party, as was usual. Khan had no special connections to the Pakistani government, and was not yet working as its spy.

Nonetheless, he was making university contacts in the fields of engineering and applied science, and unintentionally laying the foundation for the European network that would help Pakistan to produce nuclear arms. Khan spent four years in Delft, where he earned a master's degree and learned to speak good Dutch. He and Henny then moved to Leuven, in Belgium, where he pursued doctoral studies at Catholic University under a professor named Martin Brabers—a metallurgist who was later to serve (innocently, he claimed) as an important consultant to the Pakistani nuclear-weapons program. In Belgium, Henny gave birth to two daughters, two years apart. Khan said that he did not need a son, and that given the overcrowding of the world, two children were enough. He was not a brilliant researcher but a willing and hardworking one. Over the course of his studies in Delft and Leuven he published twenty-three papers and edited one book (with Brabers) on a variety of arcane metallurgical topics. His superiors were impressed, and so were his friends. To top it off, he was affable and outgoing and, as everyone agreed, just a very nice guy.

In 1972 he received his Ph.D. in metallurgical engineering, and having cast about for jobs, went to work in Amsterdam for a consulting firm called FDO. He might just as easily have taken a position at a university, a steel mill, or an aircraft manufacturer; he certainly was not setting out to build a bomb. But FDO happened to specialize in the design of machines called ultra-centrifuges—rapidly spinning tubes used to separate and concentrate certain isotopes in gasified uranium, in order ultimately to produce enriched uranium. FDO was a major subcontractor for a consortium

called URENCO, which had been founded jointly by the governments of Britain, Holland, and Germany two years before. It had built a large state-of-the-art centrifuge plant in the Dutch town of Almelo, on the border with Germany, to enrich uranium for the nuclear-power-generation industry. The process there is in broad strokes not difficult to understand. The fissionable isotope known as U-235 exists in natural uranium at a concentration of only 0.7 percent; for the purposes of a power-generation reactor the concentration of that isotope has to be increased about fivefold, to at least three percent; the trick is to isolate and shed a similar isotope known as U-238, which is infinitesimally heavier. By spinning at very high speeds—electrically driven to 70,000 revolutions per minute, in perfect balance, on superb bearings, in a vacuum, linked by pipes to thousands of other units doing the same—this is what the centrifuge achieves. At URENCO the purpose was peaceful. One problem, however, with nuclear technology is that often the difference between a peaceful and a military purpose is merely a matter of the mind. Tangibly, the type of centrifuges in use at URENCO were (and are) capable of continuing the enrichment process past the commercial mark, and of concentrating the U-235 to more than 90 percent, which is the threshold necessary for a fission bomb.

As a result, the operational details at both URENCO and FDO were held as state secrets, and Khan—like other employees—needed to receive a security clearance before going to work there. This turned out not to be an obstacle. The Dutch internal security service ran a background check, and Khan was approved. Much has been made of this since then, as if the background check was too perfunctory; but Khan had strong references and a clean record, and even he did not yet know what was soon to be on his mind. He was thirty-six years old, a diligent husband, and the father of two. He moved with his family into a nice little house in a nice little town, and settled in to enjoy a quiet Dutch life.

But then history came chasing Khan down. It took the form of war. In the spring of 1971, after years of discriminatory treatment by Pakistan's dominant west, East Pakistan rose up in rebellion and began to agitate for independence as a new nation, called Bangladesh. The Pakistani military reacted brutally, and a terrible civil war broke out on the Bengali deltas and plains. The fighting went on inconclusively for most of the year, generating huge casualties among civilians and sending several million refugees streaming across the borders into India. Pakistan's international reputation sank to an all-time low. Having gauged the geopolitical effect of this correctly, and emboldened by its friendship with the Soviet Union, India then seized the opportunity to dismember its foe, and mounted a full-scale invasion of East Pakistan with overwhelming force. The battles were short. Pakistan's once strutting army collapsed, and in December of 1971, at a humiliating ceremony in a

stadium in Dacca, it unconditionally surrendered. Ninety-three thousand Pakistani soldiers were taken prisoner. For what it's worth, an independent Bangladesh was born.

Thirty-four years later it may seem obvious that the loss of Bangladesh was a blessing—but it is still not seen so today in Pakistan, and it was certainly not seen so at the time. The trauma was severe. The military regime fell, and Pakistan's greatest civilian leader—the democratically elected, populist, and some would say demagogic Zulfikar Ali Bhutto—assumed power. Bhutto was a visionary, and seems to have believed that he had been born to save the nation. The lessons he

By the mid-1960s influential Pakistanis had begun to argue for nuclear deterrence against India. Bhutto, then the foreign minister, asserted that Pakistanis would eat grass if necessary, but they would have their bomb.

drew from the defeat were similar to those of almost all Pakistanis, and therefore probably to those of A. Q. Khan as well. Khan was still in Leuven, wrapping up his dissertation, but with a close eye on his homeland. Pakistan was engaging in a certain amount of introspection and self-criticism, but no sooner had the domestic purges occurred than the blame for Bangladesh shifted primarily to the outside. A fifth of Pakistan's territory and more than half of its population had been lost—and to crafty Hindus who now seemed certain to want to finish off the rest. To make matters worse, Pakistan in its time of need had been abandoned by its important allies, China and the United States, whose power had been checked by the Soviet Union, and whose nuclear arms had proved to be of no value at all. Only the Islamic nations had rallied to its side, but they were weak and disdained, and incapable of providing much beyond symbolic help. When all was said and done, twenty-four years after the Partition, Pakistan seemed to be in mortal danger, and quite obviously could rely on no one but itself.

What Khan may not have known, but Bhutto certainly did, was that India was well on its way to possessing nuclear weapons. The intention to acquire them apparently dated back to even before the Partition, when Jawaharlal Nehru, looking forward to independence, said, "I hope Indian scientists will use the atomic force for constructive purposes, but if India is threatened, she will inevitably try to defend herself by all means at her disposal." In the literature on nuclear proliferation today, positions are staked out to explain why nations choose to develop nuclear weapons. Is it because of external threat and strategic defense? International prestige and diplomatic power? Bureaucratic striving? Populism, nationalism, and the need to impress constituents on the streets? In India it seems to have been all of

the above, with added emphasis on strategic defense after India's humiliating 1962 defeat by China and China's subsequent test of a nuclear weapon in 1964. India's program was pursued in semi-secret, closely linked to a public program of nuclear-power generation and partially masked by it: it would not use enriched uranium as the fuel for weapons but rather would use plutonium, a byproduct of nuclear reactors that can be extracted from their radioactive wastes. On the receiving end the difference between enriched uranium and plutonium would not matter: the former had been used against Hiroshima, the latter against Nagasaki, and either material suitably compressed in a few fission bombs could release enough energy to devastate Pakistan. Pakistan protested in capitals around the world, and asked for diplomatic intervention, but to no avail. Though the likelihood of an Indian nuclear military program was evident, no sanctions were imposed; and indeed, Canada, France, and the United States continued to help India with its nominally peaceful nuclear plans.

Pakistan had its own nuclear plans, though less well developed. In the 1950s President Dwight D. Eisenhower launched a since discredited program called Atoms for Peace, under which a benevolent United States, while ensuring world peace with its rapidly growing nuclear arsenal, would assist governments with technology and training in the development of nuclear-power generation—as if such capacities were unrelated to the development of atomic bombs. Pakistan answered with the creation of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, known as the PAEC, which initially had little interest in weapons, and to the extent that it progressed at all, did indeed concentrate on the possibilities for electric-power generation. By the mid-1960s, however, influential Pakistanis had begun to argue for nuclear deterrence against India. Bhutto, who was then the foreign minister, uttered the now famous remark that Pakistanis would eat grass if necessary, but they would have their bomb.

Given the desperate circumstances of Bhutto's subsequent rise to the national leadership, in 1971, it is not surprising that he set out almost immediately to make those dreams real. One month after the surrender of Pakistan's army in Bangladesh he called a secret meeting of about seventy Pakistani scientists under an awning on a lawn in a town in the Punjab. He asked them for a nuclear bomb, and they responded enthusiastically, promising delivery within an impossible five years. The largest obstacle, as usual, would be not with the design of a nuclear device but with the acquisition of the fissionable material to fuel it. At the meeting Bhutto placed responsibility for the weapons program with the PAEC, under an envoy to the IAEA named Munir Ahmed Khan. Munir Ahmed Khan was not

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related to A. Q. Khan, and would soon become his mortal enemy. Intending to exploit the radioactive waste from a small Canadian-built power reactor just coming on line, he set off, as the Indians had, on the path toward a plutonium bomb. Though Pakistan was not a signatory to international nonproliferation accords, the Canadians had required that their reactor be placed under IAEA controls: its fuel was to be accounted for before and after use, to verify that none was being diverted. Given his familiarity with the IAEA, Munir Ahmed Khan was not unduly concerned: presumably he believed that Pakistan could somehow secretly acquire additional nuclear fuel. His main need, therefore, was for a plutonium-extraction plant—a facility that the French eventually signed a contract to provide.

There is no evidence that A. Q. Khan was yet aware of the growing nuclear escalation on the Indian Subcontinent. But on May 18, 1974, an event occurred that left no room for doubt: beneath the desert of Rajasthan, near the Pakistani border, India detonated a fission device of roughly the same yield as the bomb that had destroyed Hiroshima. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was watching. The desert floor heaved, and a message of success was sent to the capital, New Delhi. It read, "The Buddha is smiling." India explained to the world that this had been a peaceful test, and asserted that a nuclear device is no more inherently threatening than any other explosive—that the character of a device depends on its intended use. The world was *unconvinced, but did little in response.*

In the summer of 1974 Khan sent a letter to Prime Minister Bhutto, presenting his credentials, summarizing the purpose of centrifuges, and again volunteering to help. The two men met in Karachi.

Far away in Amsterdam, A. Q. Khan believed that the Buddha had smiled in anticipation of Pakistan's death. He had been working at FDO for two years, and with the access he had found to the URENCO centrifuge technology, he realized that by chance he was in a position to help Pakistan face the threat. Apparently on his own, he decided to take action. It is said that soon after the Indian test he sought out a couple of senior Pakistani engineers who were visiting Holland to buy a wind tunnel, but when he mentioned his background and expressed his desire to return to Pakistan to help develop its nuclear capabilities, they discouraged him, saying that his expertise would not be appreciated and he might not even be able to find a job. That particular story is typical of those Khan later told (with increasing rancor) to bolster his heroic self-image—Khan as the national savior, struggling against the complacency, if not

outright treachery, of nearly everyone else—but the story is plausible enough, perhaps, to be true.

His next move was more aggressive. In the summer of 1974 he sent a letter to Prime Minister Bhutto, presenting his credentials, summarizing the purpose of centrifuges, and again volunteering to help. Bhutto responded through the embassy in The Hague. The two men met in Karachi in December of 1974, after Khan and his family arrived for a holiday. Khan argued for a Pakistani effort to enrich uranium—a route to the bomb that, he assured Bhutto, would be faster than Munir Ahmed Khan's pursuit of plutonium reprocessing, then under way. The plutonium project was troubled, because the Canadians had responded to the Indian test by beginning to withdraw their support for the Pakistani reactor they had built. Pakistan had expressed outrage, but could not escape the fact that Bhutto had effectively renewed his call for a bomb. Munir Ahmed Khan and his engineers at the PAEC believed that they could run the reactor without Canadian assistance, and they insisted that with the French extraction plant in the offing, Pakistan should stick with its original plan. Bhutto did not disagree, but he saw the advantage of mounting a parallel effort toward enriched uranium, and decided on the spot to place A. Q. Khan in charge.

And Khan was a self-starter. Even before the go-ahead from Bhutto, he had gotten to work. For sixteen fruitful days in the fall of 1974 he had stayed in Almelo on a special assignment to URENCO, where he had helped with the

translation of secret centrifuge plans from German into Dutch, and in his spare time had walked freely through the buildings, taking copious notes—in Urdu. Some of the places he had visited were nominally off limits to him, but not once had he been challenged. A few people had asked him what his notes were about, and he had answered, half truthfully, that he was writing letters home.

With Bhutto's approval, Khan now returned to Amsterdam to gather more information. It was early 1975. He was thirty-eight years old, and much liked at FDO. As was his habit, he arrived at the lab with postcards, sweets, and other little presents for the staff. Despite the secrets held at FDO, the atmosphere there was even more open and relaxed than at URENCO, with no visible security and none of the culture of suspicion that governments might have wished to impose. One bin held discarded prototype centrifuge parts—components that were perhaps not quite within specifications—and employees were free to scavenge keepsakes from it to put on their desks. Either immediately before or after his trip to Pakistan, Khan began not merely to scavenge them but to take them home. Presumably, some of those components made their way to Pakistan's embassy, which had received instructions from Islamabad to help.

Thirty years later I met Khan's office mate of 1975, an FDO machinist and staff photographer named Frits Veerman, now sixty-two, who drove me to Almelo, on his first return to the URENCO site in all this time. Veerman turned out to be a typically moralistic Dutchman with a maddening manner, as a driver, of strictly respecting the speed limits, to the point of braking frequently to slow down. Riding with him was a rare form of torture not yet known to Pakistan. I soon understood that living with him would have been worse: his wife and children believed he was obsessed with Khan, and wished he would leave the subject alone. But Veerman had been marked by Khan's actions, and whether because of this brush with fame or because he was truly troubled by the spread of nuclear weapons, he could not stop repeating the story.

He told me that he and Khan had been close friends. They were fellow geeks, I suppose—at least to the extent that centrifuges seem truly to have excited them both. Whenever Khan discovered something interesting on the laboratory floor, or Veerman did, they would troop off together to study it and share their joy. They shared other enthusiasms as well. When the weather turned warm and women in Amsterdam took to walking around in scanty clothes, the two friends would go sightseeing through the city, in earnest appreciation of the female form. Khan in particular was easily smitten, and occasionally would wander off to ogle some woman despite Veerman's entreaties to return to work. I asked Veerman if he meant to say that Khan had frequented prostitutes. He answered as he often did to my questions about those times, with a bewildered and plaintive "I don't *know*!"—as if he couldn't be sure of anything anymore.

But Khan was almost certainly a good family man, and for that reason a better spy. Veerman was still a bachelor then, and sometimes was invited over for dinner. Henny was less gregarious than Khan, and a bit overshadowed by him, but she was gracious and polite, and the two girls were young and very nice. The family spoke English at home. Veerman would arrive with ten pounds of Dutch cheese, or more, because some of his relatives were cheese makers, and Henny liked cheese a lot. The meals typically consisted of barbecued chicken and rice. Khan had a special fondness for the chicken. The drinks were non-alcoholic. In the style of small Dutch towns, the curtains were left open at night and the illumination was kept high, so anyone passing on the street could see that inside the house everything was just right. Veerman believed nearly the same for a while, though on several occasions he noticed classified documents on a desk in Khan's home, in apparent violation of the lab's security procedures. Khan explained that Henny was helping with translations. He was so clearly unconcerned with hiding the documents away that Veerman assumed Henny was being paid, and therefore had been checked out and approved. Sometimes other Pakistanis came for dinner. They did not explain their jobs. Much

later, when Veerman himself was accused of having helped Khan, Dutch intelligence agents showed him photographs confirming that these men had come from the Pakistani embassy, and were its spies. It appears likely that at the very dinners Veerman enjoyed, blueprints and other documents were being collected and taken away. But everything seemed so aboveboard—so normal and brightly lit—that Veerman was mostly just glad to have this friend. He was probably also proud. The pattern was similar at the lab, where Khan formally and in writing asked Veerman to take detailed photographs of the centrifuges and their parts. Taking photographs was one of Veerman's regular jobs. And because he had a European sense of hierarchy ("Abdul was a doctor, and I was just a normal person—do you understand?"), he unquestioningly complied.

Finally, however, it was Veerman who suspected that something was wrong. He enjoyed vacationing in foreign lands, especially when he could lodge with local people and see life through their eyes. He was not much drawn to Pakistan, but when Khan suggested warmly that he should visit, and held out the promise that he could stay with Khan's friends and family, Veerman jumped at the chance. Khan suggested places to see, and provided Veerman with information about direct flights from London. Veerman began to make his plans. Veerman was of course more than a staff photographer: he was a highly specialized centrifuge technician, full of secret knowledge and useful skills. In retrospect it is obvious that Khan hoped to tangle him up or seduce him somehow, and to use him in the project to build a bomb. But then Khan made a rare miscalculation, if only of Veerman's sense of right and wrong: after a short delay, during which he must have consulted with Pakistani officials, he came back to Veerman with an offer to pay for the trip. Veerman was shocked, and immediately declined. He told me that suddenly a light lit up in his mind. Khan's wanderings at FDO and URENCO came back to him, as did the classified documents in Khan's home, his Pakistani guests, the frequent conversations he had conducted in Urdu on his office phone, the photographs he had requested, and his very enthusiasm for centrifuges. He remembered that Khan wore a large gold ring, and that once he had joked that when he had to run away, he could sell it and get home to Pakistan—he carried his ticket on his finger. Veerman no longer thought of this as a joke. He realized that his friend Abdul was a nuclear spy.

The stakes were obviously high. Veerman feared that if his suspicions were discovered, his life would be at risk. He invented an excuse not to visit Pakistan, and began gingerly to distance himself from Khan. But these were temporary measures at best; the next time Khan submitted a formal request for photographs, Veerman would have no choice but to disregard it, and would have to explain why. Furthermore, as a man trusted to handle state secrets, he believed that he had a moral responsibility to sound an alarm. The question was how. He had no proof, and was intimidated

by the idea of making serious allegations against a man of much higher rank. As best he knew, neither URENCO nor FDO had procedures in place to handle such a case, or to ensure his anonymity.

He tried to ensure it himself. He went to a public phone and called the head office at URENCO, but was unable to get through to the director. He then sent the same message to the director of FDO, also without effect. Finally he took his concerns in person to his manager at the labora-

Veerman and Khan had been close friends. They were fellow geeks—at least to the extent that centrifuges seem truly to have excited them both. It was Veerman who suspected that something was wrong.

tory. The manager was visibly skeptical. He later got back to Veerman, scolding him that such allegations were too serious to be made without proof, and advising him not to stir up trouble at the lab. FDO was overcome, in other words, by a sort of institutional inertia. Veerman assumed—and still assumes—that nothing was made of his warnings. Paradoxically, FDO's unwillingness to confront the problem provided Veerman with the anonymity he desired: to the end, Khan never suspected that his friend had turned against him. But at roughly the same time, the Dutch government learned that a certain Pakistani agent, working out of the embassy in Brussels, had attempted to buy a highly specialized centrifuge component, the knowledge of which seemed perhaps to have come from Khan. Highly specialized components are rare in the business of building bombs. The Dutch government quietly communicated its concern to the lab—acknowledging, however, that the evidence was ambiguous and inconclusive. In October of 1975 FDO finally roused itself and promoted Khan to a new and less sensitive job, which would keep him away from the centrifuge technology. Khan's stay in Europe had come to an end. He was never, however, under such pressure that he had to sell his ring and flee. Two months after his promotion, in December of 1975, he simply flew his family back to Pakistan on another holiday, and this time did not return.

He had succeeded by then in stealing the plans for the most advanced uranium-enrichment process known to the West. Such was the appearance of normalcy, however, that neither URENCO nor FDO quite woke up to what had happened. Initially Khan sent word from Pakistan that he had come down with yellow fever and would have to extend his stay into 1976; later he explained that he had found an important new job, and that regretfully he would resign from FDO, effective March 1. Relations remained friendly,

in part because Khan showed no tendency to duck and hide. He may have been something of a sociopath, and from early on. In any case, such was his self-centeredness that apparently he felt no regret, even on a personal level, for the trust he had betrayed, and he refused to believe that decent people—for instance, his old friends in Europe—might consider that he had done something wrong. These attitudes predated his return to Pakistan. He had known enough while at URENCO to lie about the nature of his letters back

home, and he must have had some sense that he might be subject to prosecution; but he was an effective spy largely because, for reasons of personality, he was such an open one. For their part, the managers at FDO remained confused. They knew that Khan was now involved in a large government project in Pakistan, probably in the construction of centrifuges. Nonetheless, they continued to communicate with him,

and in 1977, having sent a representative to Islamabad, they went so far as to sell him expensive instrumentation originally designed for URENCO.

Khan continued to cultivate Veerman as a friend and a source of secret information. In January of 1976 he wrote Veerman, "Dear Frits, it is now almost a month since we left the Netherlands, and I am gradually beginning to miss the delicious chicken. Every afternoon I think: ask Frits if he feels like eating chicken." After another chatty letter, in which he extolled the spring beauty of Islamabad and renewed his invitation to Veerman to visit, he wrote twice again, and this time got down to business. In one letter, for instance, he wrote,

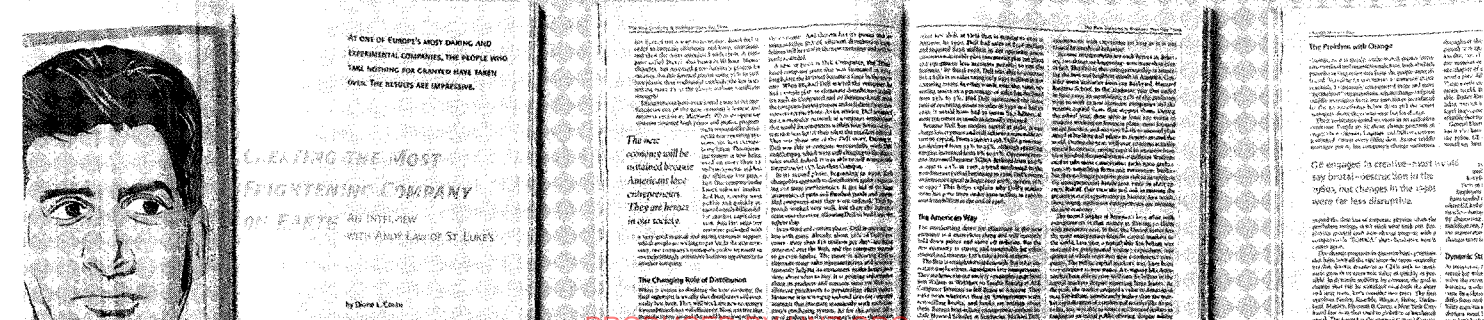
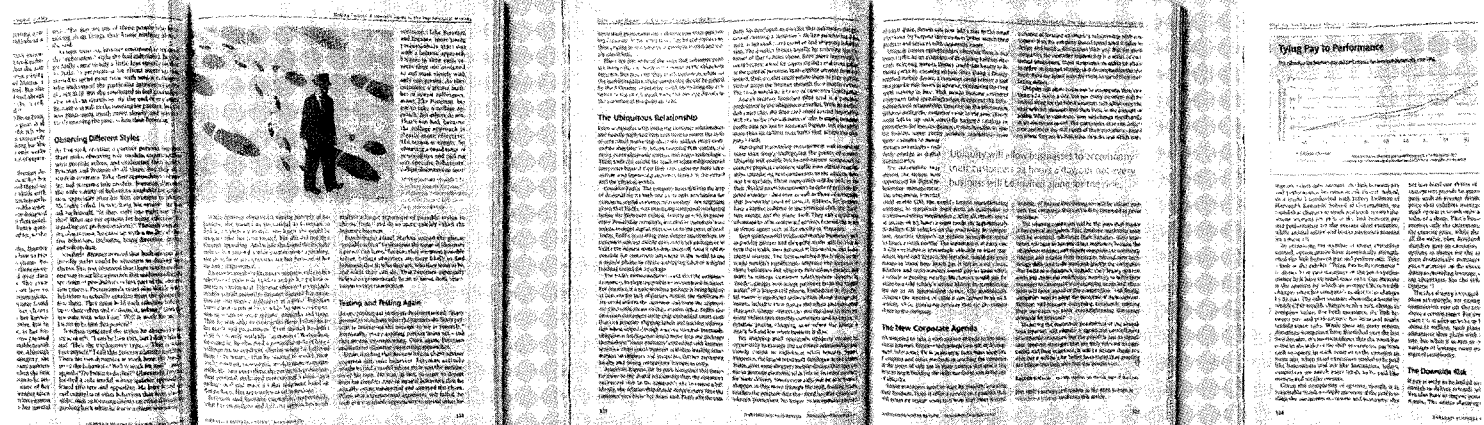
Very confidentially, I request you to help us. I urgently need the following for our research program:

1. Etches of pivots:

- (a) Tension—how many volts?
- (b) Electricity—how many amperes?
- (c) How long is etching to be done?
- (d) Solution (electrolytic) HCL or something other is added as an inhibitor.

If it is possible, [I would be] grateful for 3–4 etched pivots. I shall be very grateful if you could send a few negatives for the pattern. You would be having negatives of these.

2. Lower shock absorber. Can you provide a complete absorber of CNOR [a type of centrifuge]? Please give my greetings to Frencken, and try to get a piece for me. You can ask for it, or get it in pieces. In any case I shall like to request you very strongly to send me a few pieces (3 or 4) of membranes, and a few pieces of steel springs that are used in the absorber ... Frits, these are very urgently required, without which the research would come to a standstill. I am sure you can provide me with these. These two things are very small, and I hope you will not disappoint me.



Veerman did not answer the letters. Instead, as a dutiful employee, he took them to his supervisor, who told Veerman that he should destroy them and that if he didn't, he would go to jail. Ultimately he lost his job, as whistleblowers tend to, because he was no longer appreciated at FDO. During the subsequent period of unemployment he was picked up by Dutch security agents belatedly following Khan's trail. The agents took him to a prison in Amsterdam, where representatives of various government organizations questioned him for two days. The questioning grew confrontational. According to Veerman, the agents accused him of spying, but backed down in the face of his outrage. He in turn accused them of having made a huge mistake in allowing this technology to escape. And for what—the financial benefit of a few companies?

They said, "You have made trouble."

He said, "No, *you* have made trouble! I was a technician with a security clearance, and I found a spy in my laboratory!"

"This is not your problem."

"Yes, it is. I have a top security clearance."

"Go home. You may not talk about this anymore. It is dangerous for Holland. Go home."

Veerman did go home, but he began talking to the local press. Word gradually spread, not only about what Khan had done in Amsterdam but, by implication, about what he was doing now. Veerman remained under surveillance by the Dutch security services for more than a year. Eventually he found a safe job in the bureaucracy of a health-insurance company, where he spent the rest of his working life.

Press reports about Khan's spying continued to emerge, and they provoked emotional responses from Khan and his friends, who believed by the late 1970s that a smear campaign had been organized in the West. In 1980 Khan responded to a report in the British *Observer* with a vitriolic letter to the editor, in which he wrote,

The article on Pakistan in the issue of 9.12.1979 by Colin Smith and Shyam Bhatia was so vulgar and low that I considered it an insult to reflect on it. It was in short words a bull-shit, full of lies, insinuations and cheap journalism for money and cheap publicity. Shyam Bhatia, a Hindu bastard, could not write anything objective about Pakistan. Both insinuated as if Holland is an atomic bomb manufacturing factory where, instead of cheese balls, you could pick up "triggering mechanisms." Have you for a moment thought of the meaning of this word? Of course not because you could not differentiate between the mouth and the back hole of a donkey.

Despite such transparent bluster and prevarication, and the fact that Khan had indeed obtained state secrets, the truth is that by European legal standards it was difficult to prove that Khan had been a spy. In 1980 the Dutch government issued an embarrassed report, concluding that Khan had probably stolen centrifuge designs but pointing out that the evidence remained weak and

circumstantial. Indeed, three years later, after further investigations, when the Dutch finally prosecuted Khan, it was not for espionage but for the letters he had written to Veerman requesting classified information. "Attempted espionage" was apparently the best they could do. Khan was convicted in absentia, and sentenced to four years in prison.

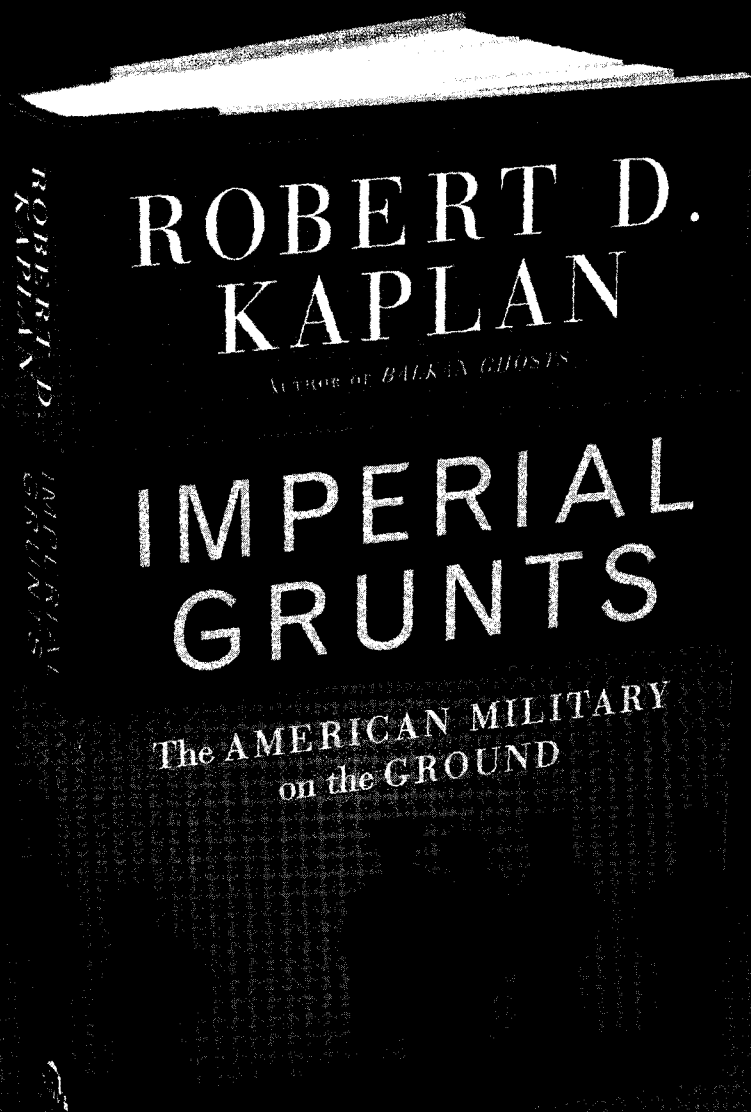
Khan saw dark forces at play. Zahid Malik faithfully writes, "This court was comprised of three judges, and was presided over by a woman who was a Jew. Another of the judges was also a Jew. It looked as if this case was instituted under pressure from the Israeli Prime Minister, and its verdict was also written in Tel Aviv."

If so, the Zionist conspirators were uncharacteristically sloppy, because Khan was never properly served with the charges, as a result of which a Dutch court overturned the conviction two years later. Khan appeared on Pakistani television for the first time soon afterward. He said, "This case was false and *mala fide*. I am happy that it is all over, because my prestige, which had been affected, has now not only been vindicated, but all the allegations which were being leveled against Pakistan's nuclear program have also been quashed." Not even Khan could have quite believed these claims. But Khan was gloating. By then it was June of 1986, one decade after his return, and as the world was coming to recognize, Pakistan in that short time had already achieved the capacity to build a nuclear bomb. People had said that in such a place it could not be done.

When, someday, the nuclear arming of the world is nearer to being complete—when, say, a few dozen fourth-rate countries have been able to acquire such destructive power—people may still be blaming the Dutch, as they do today, for having allowed Khan to obtain such dangerous knowledge and run away. The fact of the matter, however, is that once the technology of nuclear weaponry became manifest in the ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in 1945, the spying that led to its subsequent spread was as difficult to prevent at Los Alamos and elsewhere as, later, at Almelo. By the time Khan began to steal from the Dutch, similar acts of intellectual "borrowing" had to varying degrees contributed to the acquisition of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union, China, Israel, France, India, and white South Africa—and also to nuclear-weapons projects that were ultimately (and perhaps temporarily) abandoned in Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, and Taiwan. It is true that Khan's success came as a particular shock, because it turned this runt called Pakistan into something like a runt with a gun. But to see that success clearly, and to understand the further proliferation that has resulted, it is insufficient to focus on the loss of state secrets, or to single out the Dutch.

Khan himself has accurately said that the designs he obtained in Holland were not nearly enough. Building the

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thousands of centrifuges that were necessary, and then putting them to use, required solving untold numbers of practical problems, and equipping a new industrial plant with technology that lay beyond the indigenous capabilities of Pakistan. Khan's solution, once he returned to Pakistan, was to buy the technology in bits and pieces from manufacturers and consultants in the West. He knew where to shop because he had kept names and addresses from his years in Europe, and he knew who might provide what, and why. Later he bragged that it was this knowledge, and not his so-called theft of designs, that counted most in enabling Pakistan to build the bomb. The market he worked was gray rather than black, because with few exceptions the equipment and materials he sought had multiple uses, and usually would trigger questions only if a nuclear purpose was openly declared. For the most sensitive items Khan used front companies, false end-user certificates, and third-country destinations to obscure the intended use; but generally he or his agents simply went out and bought the stuff. The list was long. Machine tools, magnets, exotic steel. Vacuum pumps, ball bearings, instrumentation of all kinds. The manufacturers who sold to Khan, like the European professors who signed on as his consultants, tended to be willingly naive and greedy. Those who were confronted by Western authorities invariably claimed to believe they were helping an impoverished country to pursue peaceful

I want to question the bloody holier-than-thou attitudes of the Americans and the British. Are these bastards God-appointed guardians of the world to stockpile hundreds of thousands of nuclear warheads and have they God-given authority to carry out explosions every month? If we start a modest programme, we are the satans, the devils ...

He had overstated the numbers, but he was expressing widely held opinions, and indeed making a legitimate point. Since the 1960s the possession of nuclear weapons had been considered the exclusive prerogative of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—the Soviet Union, France, Great Britain, China, and the United States—with a special exception made for Israel, and with Japan and the rest of Europe tagging along unarmed but under the protection of the American or the Soviet nuclear umbrella. The inequity of this arrangement was formalized in 1970 (when Khan was still a graduate student) by an openly discriminatory global agreement: an American initiative known as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, or NPT, which recognized the overlap between electric power generation and the construction of weapons, and attempted to place controls on the spread of fissionable fuel and nuclear technology. That treaty today, having at best slowed the emergence of some new nuclear-weapons states, still constitutes the foundation for nonproliferation efforts worldwide. It has four essential parts. The first pro-

hibits the traditional non-nuclear-weapons states (or the 184 that have signed—India, Pakistan, and Israel never have) from attempting to build nuclear weapons. The second assures those same states that as a consequence of joining the treaty they have the right to acquire peaceful nuclear technology—subject, however, to intrusive

Two months after his promotion Khan flew his family back to Pakistan, and this time did not return. He had succeeded by then in stealing the plans for the most advanced uranium-enrichment process known to the West.

research. Pakistan was indeed an impoverished country, and all the more so because it was spending a fortune on this. I've been told that Khan was willing to pay two or three times the going rate for what he bought, as a premium for working fast and in the shadows. And having such money was fun. Spending it gave Khan power. He felt vindicated somehow that in the same nations where he was being pilloried as a spy, there were so many people who, as he described them, would come begging for his business. Nor did it escape his attention that one of those nations was Pakistan's former colonial master, and that the beggars now were whites. At times it was nearly enough to make a man glad for the nuclear success, next door, of all those Hindu bastards.

Khan particularly resented two of the traditional nuclear powers. Responding to criticisms of Pakistan's program, he wrote a bitter letter in 1979 to the German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*, in which he said,

IAEA inspections and controls. So far, so good—why insist on equity in the world if that lets the world go up in smoke? But the third part, which is an operational understanding, works as a subversive display of just the sort of political power that nuclear weapons can provide: it is a blanket exemption from any such international intrusion for the traditional “club of five.” Finally, the fourth part is a feeble promise that the declared nuclear powers will themselves somehow, someday, disarm—standing down from power in a dream world without nuclear weapons, which no one can realistically expect to see.

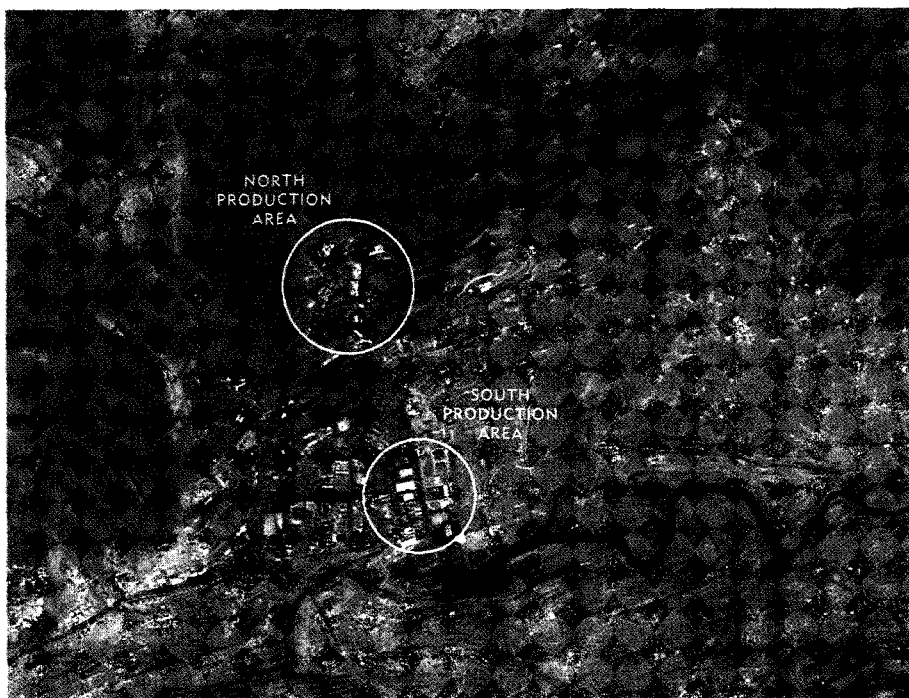
In the West the weaknesses of the Non-Proliferation Treaty were understood from the start. For the treaty to have weight it would have to be backed by the threat of sanctions—but even then, given the willingness of governments to “eat grass” to acquire such military capabilities, it was unlikely to deter serious aspirants from pursuing the bomb. The solution, therefore, would lie in the complex realm of

export controls—restrictions on the sale of nuclear-related materials and components that might appear to be for peaceful purposes (research, health care, power generation) but could be used for weapons development. Emphasis was to be put on technologies that would allow countries to become self-sufficient in nuclear fuels—on uranium-enrichment and plutonium-extraction plants. Exports would be allowed to countries that had joined the treaty, subject to IAEA scrutiny on the ground, but would be banned to countries that had refused to sign, like Pakistan. The reliance on the United Nations posed obvious operational problems: the IAEA was a politicized bureaucracy, awash in national jealousies, and staffed by functionaries who considered themselves to be in the business primarily of encouraging nuclear-energy development. Nonetheless, in the early and mid-1970s two groups of technologically advanced countries (diplomatic assemblies known as the Zangger Committee and the Nuclear Suppliers Group) began to meet to decide on the lists of restricted materials and equipment and to negotiate the tricky terrain of national implementation and cooperation between participating governments. Over the thirty ensuing years their record has been mixed. Though they have produced ever longer export control lists that have helped to slow the nuclear trade by forcing more of it underground, they themselves have been stymied by national bureaucracies, slowed by governmental reluctance to interfere with lucrative business deals, and frustrated by the depths of global trade. As a result their lists have lagged behind the market they intend to regulate. And at no point have they been a match for energies like those of A. Q. Khan.

In fairness, Khan was an extraordinarily aggressive man. After his return to Pakistan, in December of 1975, he spent a few months within the confines of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, but he was frustrated by its slow pace, and he angrily burst free. In a private conversation with Bhutto he accused the PAEC chairman—the despised Munir Ahmed Khan—of betraying the country. As he later remembered the conversation to Zahid Malik, Khan said to Bhutto, “Munir Ahmed Khan and his people are liars and cheats. They have no love for the country. They are not even faithful to you. They have told you a pack of lies. No work is being carried out, and Munir Ahmed Khan is cheating you.” What he did not say, but at some point apparently believed, was that Munir Ahmed Khan had been turned by his tenure at the IAEA, and was actively subverting Pakistan’s nuclear goals. Evidently Bhutto was too shrewd to be convinced, because he never took action

against A. Q. Khan’s enemies; but with nothing to be gained by frustrating Khan, and with perhaps some benefits to accrue from setting up a competition with the PAEC, he decided to give Khan full autonomy, and promised him a large and secret budget. He must have thought he was doing Khan a favor.

On July 31, 1976, Khan founded the Engineering Research Laboratories to set up and operate a centrifuge



Satellite image of the Khan Research Laboratories, in Kahuta, northern Pakistan

plant based on the stolen URENCO designs. The raw uranium was to be mined in central Pakistan, converted to gas, and sent to Khan to spin very fast. If anyone asked, the stated purpose was to produce uranium enriched merely to the level necessary for electric-power generation—albeit completely outside of IAEA verification and controls. The plant was to be built as a complex of industrial-looking buildings among low hills about forty miles southeast of Islamabad, in an out-of-the-way town called Kahuta, which could be locked down and guarded by Pakistani security forces. Because Khan felt that his nation’s survival was at stake, he proceeded not sequentially but simultaneously on multiple fronts—hiring staff, laying out the installations, initiating the construction of the Kahuta plant, and setting up a pilot project elsewhere to resolve the practical intricacies of linked centrifuges and to make the first trial runs. This was a big operation. Ultimately he hired as many as 10,000 people. Most important, he launched the procurement effort in Europe and the United States.

The U.S. government knew very well what was happening; Bhutto had made no secret of his ambitions, and by conventional logic it made sense for Pakistan to acquire a nuclear bomb. As an element of Cold War strategy, Pakistan

remained a U.S. client state, somewhat prickly under Bhutto, but supported by American aid, and still quite accessible to American diplomats and officials. It is reasonable to assume—and was always presumed within Khan's inner circle to be true—that the CIA had penetrated both the PAEC and Kahuta from an early date. Given the size of the programs under way, this would have been easy to do. The view from the inside was sobering: despite an assumption among European governments that Pakistan lacked the necessary technical expertise, it became clear that this effort was serious, and that it was likely to succeed. Such an outcome seemed all the more worrisome in Washington, D.C., because Bhutto had resentfully mentioned Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and Communist bombs, and the possibility therefore existed that a Pakistani device would amount to more than a counterbalance to India—that it would be handled as a “Muslim” bomb to be spread around. Apparently other countries had the same idea, though with hope rather than fear: Libya and Saudi Arabia, for example, are both suspected of having funded Khan early on, probably with the expectation of a return. In any case, by the late 1970s, as Khan proceeded determinedly and American appeals to desist were rebuffed by the government in Islamabad, U.S. officials realized that the only chance they had to stop Pakistan from building a bomb was to take the supply-side approach—to block Pakistan's procurements abroad.

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Blocking procurements within the United States proved to be relatively easy, because Khan had few American contacts, and U.S. export-control lists were already quite extensive—significantly more so than those that had been agreed upon by the international supplier groups. Moreover, deep within the customs and commerce bureaucracies, where such regulations are effectuated (or not) day to day, American officials, as representatives of a dominant nuclear power, tended naturally to agree on the importance of nonproliferation, and were alert to hints of violations that appeared in the paperwork that crossed their desks. As a result, though some transactions slipped by unseen, the U.S. government thwarted most of the attempted acquisitions from American suppliers.

The export-control record was altogether different in Europe, where constellations of companies were selling their wares to the Pakistanis, often with the tacit or explicit approval of their governments. In a breathless but generally

reliable book titled *The Islamic Bomb*, published in 1981, the reporters Steve Weissman and Herbert Krosney tell a typical story of three of Khan's purchasing agents, who in 1976 went to a small Swiss company in a small Swiss town and proposed to buy its specialized high-vacuum valves for the express purpose of equipping a Pakistani centrifuge enrichment plant. The company dutifully checked with the Swiss authorities, who sent back a printout of their export regulations, including the list of restricted items as defined by the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Weissman and Krosney write,

Complete centrifuge units were listed, and could only be exported to [IAEA] safeguarded facilities, which the Pakistani enrichment plant was not. High-vacuum valves were not listed, even if expressly intended for a centrifuge enrichment unit. The valves might be necessary to the centrifuge. But, in the logic of the ... list, they were not “nuclear sensitive,” and did not directly separate the two different uranium isotopes, uranium 235 and uranium 238.

The company, in other words, was informed that it could proceed with the sale, and so it did—as did others throughout Western Europe. In Holland, also in 1976, a Dutch company in the automotive-transmission business sold 6,500 high-strength steel tubes to Pakistan—tubes that could serve as the basic components of centrifuges. The Dutch government knew of the deal and advised against it, but the company sent their product anyway (initially claim-

ing that the tubes were for agriculture), and argued that no export license was required by Dutch law. The argument was accepted, and further shipments went through without delay. Ultimately there were several paltry prosecutions, including one that led to the conviction of a Dutch businessman named Henk Slebos for illegally exporting an American-made Tektronix oscilloscope

in 1983. Slebos was a personal friend of Khan's, and one of his main European suppliers. He was sentenced to a year in prison, but never served the time, and continued brazenly to send equipment to Pakistan. Controls were so loose that for more than a decade Khan himself kept visiting Europe.

Such was the scene American officials faced in the global nuclear marketplace as they grappled with the inadequacy of the UN's multi-party approach, and tried through private entreaties to European governments to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. They were undercut, as they are today, by the thousands of nuclear warheads that the United States insisted on retaining for itself, and the resentment that such an obvious double standard provoked even within countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, which were said to be direct beneficiaries of American nuclear strength. They did, however, experience a few successes—particularly in 1977, when they pressured the French into backing out

of the lucrative agreement to provide Pakistan with its long-desired plutonium-reprocessing plant. The cancellation set back the PAEC's nuclear-weapons plans by a decade or more. In consequence it further legitimized A. Q. Khan, and helped him to pursue his alternative goals—but nothing could be done about that anyway. For France the cost of killing the deal was several billion dollars, because of the loss of associated contracts for French products such as airplanes and trucks. The decision was all the more difficult because, with its “*force de frappe*,” France embodied the right (and perhaps the need) of independent nations to bear nuclear arms. Such was its ambivalence that it had refused to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty. (It would not join until 1992.) Nonetheless, as an established power pretending to diplomatic relevance, it had little choice but to back away once it was faced with evidence of Pakistan's ambitions. By American estimation France this time behaved well.

West Germany, however, did not. Thirty years had elapsed since World War II, the German economy was strong, and the government had embarked on an ambitious program of energy self-sufficiency, which was to be achieved largely through nuclear-power generation. Germany had joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1970, but from the start it had been concerned almost exclusively with the provisions that promoted the rights of member states to acquire peaceful nuclear technology. In practice the German government did not rigorously differentiate between countries that were member states and countries that were not. In the mid-1970s it entered into a major nuclear deal with Brazil, which had not joined the treaty but agreed in this case to accept IAEA safeguards as if it had. Such safeguards were weak, and everyone knew it. Nonetheless, Germany was going to sell Brazil no fewer than eight nuclear reactors, a uranium-enrichment plant, a fuel-fabrication plant, and plutonium-reprocessing facilities. Presumably the centrifuges would be of the same URENCO design that A. Q. Khan was stealing for Pakistan at that very time. U.S. officials were angry, because they had indications that Brazil was secretly seeking a bomb. (So was Argentina, which had rejected the Non-Proliferation Treaty as “the disarmament of the disarmed.”) But when the Americans took their concerns to Bonn, the Germans reacted skeptically, and said they would proceed with the deal. In Bonn an inside observer recently said to me, “The Americans said, ‘Hey, *wait* a minute! This is what we can show you.’ And they showed the Germans a little bit of information. Apparently it was just enough to persuade the Germans that they were off the reservation.”

The Germans gave in and reluctantly let the Brazilian contracts drift. Fifteen years later both Brazil and Argentina, for domestic political reasons, formally renounced their nuclear-weapons ambitions.

But the Germans were increasingly restive. Reflecting a sentiment that was organic and widespread in Europe, they resented the disproportionate power of the United States, and suspected the Americans of wanting to use nonpro-



Centrifuges in a facility of the uranium-enrichment consortium URENCO

liferation to corner the free-world market in nuclear fuels. The founding of URENCO was an act of resistance to such perceived domination. Moreover, resentment toward the United States was greatest not among the national policymakers, who could sometimes be swayed, but deep within European bureaucracies, among the ordinary diplomats and officials who transacted the daily business of government and were largely immune to American pressure. It was on that level—or lower—that the Pakistani purchasing network operated, and that the American attempts to stop Khan failed. The patterns were repetitive. Whenever American intelligence discovered that one company or another was about to export devices to Khan, U.S. officials would pass the information along in writing to their European counterparts in the expectation that the activity could be stopped. In some cases the Europeans refused to act because the sales were unambiguously legal. In many others interpretation would have been possible, and with sufficient commitment and energy the companies could have been approached and warned off. Instead, the Europeans closed ranks. Their attitude toward the Americans was them against us. The reports were slid into drawers, and the drawers were slid shut.

In Islamabad, A. Q. Khan was riding high. Such was the perceived importance of his work that he seemed safe from the political dangers even of Pakistan. His mentor Zulfikar Bhutto was overthrown in 1977, and later hanged, but the new dictator, General Zia ul Haq, proved to be just as committed to the bomb. By cutting off foreign aid for a year starting in September of 1977, the United States tried forcing Zia to cancel the French plutonium plan, but the effect was only to heighten Pakistan's nuclear resolve. People don't like being pushed around. In April of 1979 the United States tried for a second time, suspending aid because of Pakistan's nuclear activities—but only eight months later, on Christmas Day, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and suddenly it seemed to Washington that more-important issues were at stake. Aid was resumed and nuclear nonproliferation quietly de-emphasized, as over the following decade Pakistan bled the Soviets on behalf of the United States. Much has been written about the folly of that tradeoff—and certainly the wisdom of the Afghan war will be argued for years to come—but the truth is that nothing the United States had done or could feasibly do was going to keep Pakistan from arming.

Khan, for one, never doubted his success. As long as he was granted autonomy and the budget he demanded, he was going to build the bomb. It is believed that as early as 1978 he may have had a prototype centrifuge running, and have been able to show some increase in the concentration of the isotope U-235. Three years later, in 1981, the production plant at Kahuta was ready to start up, and with such promise that General Zia renamed it the Khan Research Laboratories. This was the sort of gesture that made Khan inordinately proud. The work continued. There were difficulties with balancing the centrifuges, and with earthquakes and floods, but in just a few years Kahuta would probably have 10,000 centrifuges in place, and already a good number of them were linked and running. Around 1982 the plant achieved the first weapons-grade uranium, enriched to 90 percent or more; by 1984 it was producing enough fissionable material to build several bombs a year. Nor had Khan neglected the need for a warhead: his was an implosion device, based on a simple Chinese design, with an enriched-uranium core the size of a soccer ball surrounded by a symmetrical array of high explosives wired to a high-voltage switch to be triggered all at once. Soon he was going to work on a missile, too.

He had a problem, however, and it was poisoning his soul. Despite his repeated attempts to discredit Munir Ahmed Khan and his staff, the PAEC was still officially heading up Pakistan's nuclear-weapons program. They were going to restart their quest for plutonium reprocessing, which if successful would diminish the importance of Kahuta. Worse, they were already working on a missile, and they were developing their own warhead—one so similar to Kahuta's that Khan believed they had stolen his design. Khan fought back with transparent emotion, and increas-

ingly in public. His surrogate Zahid Malik, for instance, published this description of Munir Ahmed Khan:

Although some of his loyal friends rank him as a good administrator (or a shrewd manipulator), nobody accepts him as a good scientist. He lacks moral values and is very devious. He can even be cruel where his personal interests are concerned. According to the authors of "The Islamic Bomb," Dr. I. H. Usmani had declared Munir Ahmed Khan a liar and a selfish person who disgraced Pakistan internationally by his conspiracies. According to these authors, he is a treacherous fellow, and time has also shown that he not only cheated Mr. Bhutto but also created a lot of problems for Pakistan in the development of nuclear power and capability. Mr. Goldschmidt, Director General of the French Atomic Energy Commission, said, "I never trusted anything Munir Khan said. He could lie while being charming. I never believed a word that he said."

The leaders of Pakistan must have smiled at such crude denunciations. The rivalry between the two groups suited them well. They heaped praise on A. Q. Khan, and allowed him to become wealthy. But they kept stringing him along.

Khan knew it, too, but apparently could not help himself. His ego was inflamed. He had developed such a need for power and recognition that there was little room for anyone else. It was frustrating to him that the weapons work at Kahuta was supposed to be secret: he could not shout to the world quite as loudly as he would have liked. In his interviews and speeches, which were increasingly frequent and long, he had a way of insisting that uranium was being enriched to only 3.5 percent, and purely for peaceful purposes, but then letting his pride get the best of him and proceeding at length to discuss the logic and technology of nuclear weapons. The pattern was strange. In part it stemmed from a deliberate position of nuclear ambiguity, similar to the Israeli choice to neither confirm nor deny; but to the extent that Khan kept talking and talking, it also reflected his personal needs. He was poor at keeping secrets, because he acted too clever when he lied. He was too eager to claim credit. His denials were not intended to be believed. What he seemed to be saying was We have the bomb, and because of me.

By 1986 Pakistan had crossed the threshold, and was able to fabricate several nuclear devices. Within a few months it put its new strength to use. Toward the end of the year India mounted a large military exercise on the plains along Pakistan's borders. The exercise was dubbed Brasstacks, as in "getting down to ..." Pakistan responded by mobilizing its own troops, moving the two countries again toward war, and then apparently issued a veiled nuclear warning. It took the form of an interview that Khan gave to a freelance Indian reporter at his house in Islamabad in January of 1987, during which, according to the reporter, he reiterated earlier boasts that Pakistan had succeeded in enriching uranium to weapons-grade levels, and added, "Nobody can undo Pakistan, or take us for granted ... And let me be clear that we



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shall use the bomb if our existence is threatened." Publication of the story was delayed for several weeks while the reporter shopped it around, diminishing its immediate effect—and Khan later denied having said any such thing, accusing the reporter of being a typical Hindu hack. But in India a message had been received nonetheless, and it would resonate for years to come. There may have been other messages as well. Despite subsequent Pakistani denials, the Indians claimed they had been threatened in Islamabad, through diplomatic channels. Moreover, at the time when the opposing armies stood face-to-face along the border, and India was contemplating a pre-emptive strike, General Zia flew to an Indian-Pakistani cricket match in India, where he sat beside Rajiv Gandhi and, it is alleged, at one point leaned over and said, "If your forces cross our border by an inch, we are going to annihilate your cities." Whether or not he spoke those words, India soon withdrew its army. And by the time the crisis was over, whatever warnings had or had not been sent, somehow Pakistan had emerged as a nuclear-weapons state.

Zia died in a mysterious airplane crash in 1988, and Pakistan entered a decade of political turbulence during which it endured various corrupt and incompetent governments, generally with the army holding real power in the background. For a while the White House continued to certify, as it had since the start of the proxy war in Afghanistan, that Pakistan was nuclear-weapons free. Maintaining that fiction was an annual requirement for providing Pakistan with financial aid. But after the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, in 1989, the fiction no longer seemed necessary, and with concerns about nuclear proliferation again predominating, American aid was cut off. The cutoff saved U.S. taxpayers some money, but of course it was sapped of moral weight by America's own nuclear stance, and in Pakistan, as usual, it failed to achieve the desired results. For Khan the sanctions were a point of pride. He had never been particularly religious, but his position was increasingly Muslim and hard-line. A Pakistani general asked him if he minded the descriptions of him in the West as an evil Dr. Strangelove, and Khan answered accurately enough: "They dislike our God. They dislike our Prophet. They dislike our national leaders. And no wonder they dislike anybody who tries to put his country on an independent and self-reliant path. As long as I am sure that I am doing a good job for my country, I will ignore all such insinuations, and concentrate on my work."

And concentrate he did. In the face of increasing export controls in the 1990s, Khan expanded his global procurement network and took it largely underground. At Kahuta he continued to improve the centrifuge plant, to tweak the laboratory's warhead designs, and to develop an alternative ballistic missile to one being built by the PAEC. He also led the laboratory into the design and manufacture of a variety of conventional weapons, including surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank weapons, multi-barrel rocket launchers, laser range-finders, laser sights, reactive armor, mine-

sweeping charges, and armor-piercing tank rounds. On the civilian side Kahuta launched into the manufacture of electronic circuits, industrial switches and power supplies, and compressors for window-mounted air-conditioners. In 1992 it even established a Biomedical and Genetic-Engineering Division. Furthermore, it began to hold seminars and conferences on topics related to the experience of enriching uranium, including six International Symposia on Advanced Materials; two International Symposia on Mechanical Vibrations; the International Conference on Phase Transformations; three Vacuum Courses, some in cooperation with the Pakistan Vacuum Society; and, finally, every bomb-builder's favorite, the National Conference on Vibrations in Rotating Machinery.

In other words, Khan was going great guns. And he was having fun. Pakistan's nuclear position remained officially ambiguous, but once the American sanctions had been imposed, Khan was freer to praise himself for what he had done. Word filtered through the streets until even ordinary people knew of this grand man, and some recognized him as he whisked by in his cavalcades, surrounded by loyalists and guards. Medals and awards were showered upon him, and every one of them he counted, and every one, he felt, was justified. Ultimately he received six honorary doctoral degrees, forty-five gold medals, three gold crowns, and, twice, the Nishan-i-Imtiaz, Pakistan's highest civilian award. He played his fame for what it was worth. This was the era when he began to buy houses and luxury cars, and to go around bestowing grants on hospitals, mosques, and schools. He shared his wisdom openly, on many public occasions. He sat on the governing boards of more than two dozen universities and institutes. He was personable, charming, and sometimes apparently humble—though in the way politicians can be, without being humble at all. When people visited him at his office, he gave them pictures of himself. When those people were reporters, he allowed them to fawn.

REPORTER: You seem to be very fond of learning different languages. In fact, you appear to be almost a linguist. In how many languages have you attained proficiency, and how? Any comments on this rather strange blend of being an exceptionally brilliant scientist and a linguist?

KHAN: I know a few languages. First of all, Urdu is my mother tongue. Then after the Partition I had to learn Hindi, which I still can read and write. Later on I learned some Persian. When I went to Europe, I learned German and Dutch. I know both languages quite well. While in Europe I also took some lessons in French. And of course English has been my second language all these years. I wish I could learn Russian and Chinese, but I couldn't find the time.

REPORTER: Do you have any hobbies, and how do you relax after a strenuous day?

KHAN: I used to go fishing, fly kites, and play hockey in my young days. Then I played volleyball at university. Now it is so difficult to do these things. I do some walking, and play with our dogs and cats. It is very relaxing. I



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also read quite a bit. We go to bed very late, usually after midnight, as my wife is also always doing something, knitting, reading, etc.

REPORTER: Thank you, Dr. A. Q. Khan.

On two days in May of 1998 India broke a twenty-four-year hiatus and tested five atomic bombs—the largest of which was claimed to be a thermonuclear (fusion) device with a temporarily dialed-down yield of forty-three kilotons, roughly three times that of Little Boy, which took out Hiroshima. Independent analysts expressed skepticism about the stated size and nature of the explosions, but these were technical quibbles of little importance compared with the new political reality of an India that wanted to make such a show of its earth-shattering might. Just a few weeks earlier Khan's laboratory had successfully fired its new intermediate-range missile (a North Korean derivative dubbed the Ghauri) on a maiden 500-mile flight, and Khan had followed up with his typical saber-rattling and bluster. Flown to its full 1,000-mile range, his missile, carrying his bomb, could devastate Mumbai, Delhi, and a slew of other Indian cities, including Bhopal (perhaps occasioning bittersweet satisfaction). The missile's flight, however, does not seem to have played heavily into the Indians' decision to test—in part because of their tendency to view Khan as a bigmouth and a buffoon. In fact, physical preparations in India had been under way for a month, and the decision to proceed was made for domestic political reasons by the insecure leaders of the governing

That afternoon a small group of Pakistanis, including, of course, A. Q. Khan, gathered in a concrete bunker in Chagai, facing the chosen mountain seven miles away. Five nuclear bombs had been placed inside the test tunnel.

Hindu Nationalist Party, the BJP, who wanted to impress the masses with their strength. Sure enough, after the tests there was widespread jubilation on the streets. The celebrants ignored the possibility that the next time a nuclear weapon was ignited in India, it might be dropping in from Pakistan and vaporizing them.

In Pakistan the Indian tests were seen as a direct threat. Special attention was paid to an overexcited Indian home minister named L. K. Advani, who declared that Islamabad would have to submit to this reality, particularly as it affected the dispute over Kashmir, and that Indian troops would henceforth chase Kashmiri insurgents in "hot pursuit" right back across the border into Pakistan. So much for the sobering effect of atomic bombs. As part of the package, the Indian press was full of taunts, challenging the Pakistanis to show, if they could, that their nuclear arsenal was anything more

than a bluff. Either way the Indians figured to gain: if the Pakistanis did not now test a nuclear device, they would demonstrate their weakness, with delicious consequences for the local balance of power; if they did test, and successfully, they would join India as a target of international sanctions, and would suffer disproportionately because of their greater dependence on the charity of the world. The Pakistanis knew they were in a bind. They had weapons ready to go, and had prepared a test site years before by boring a horizontal tunnel into the center of a desert mountain, in a remote district called Chagai, in the southwestern province of Baluchistan. However, they were getting clear warnings that if they answered India in kind, they would lose not merely direct American aid, which had slowly been increasing since the last cutoff, but also the large infusions of cash from other donor nations and international lending organizations that were keeping Pakistan's economy alive. A rare public debate broke out among Pakistani elites, during which a "peace faction" urged the country's leaders to assume the moral high ground and let India take the heat alone. The soon-to-be-deposed prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, accepted repeated calls from Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, who urged the same. Sharif hoped for positive inducements—solid security guarantees and financial payoffs—and some were promised. Public sentiment, however, was overwhelmingly in favor of a test, as was sentiment within the army—Pakistan's real center of power. After several weeks of hesitation the logic of the Subcontinent prevailed, and Sharif decided to proceed.

On the night of May 27, 1998, just hours before the scheduled test, word was received from Saudi intelligence that Israeli fighters, flying on behalf of India (of course), were inbound to take out Pakistan's nuclear facilities—specifically the laboratory at Kahuta and the test site in Chagai. Pakistan scrambled its own fighters and rolled its missiles out of their

shelters in preparation to launch. Months later Khan gave an interview in which he was alleged to have said that at Kahuta that night nuclear weapons were loaded into the Ghauris—a statement he subsequently denied, and which for technical reasons seems dubious. In any case, the Indians responded immediately by preparing their own aircraft and missiles, and for a few hours the countries came close, perhaps, to a nuclear exchange. Had this occurred, it would have been just the sort of reflexive slaughter that people fear—particularly from countries like Pakistan, with insecure political and military institutions, primitive command-and-control systems, inadequate information sources, and ultra-short windows for response to their nuclear neighbors. But on the night of May 27, at least, the leaders of Pakistan had the sense to hesitate and pick up their phones. The United States and other nations assured them that they were safe, the Israeli

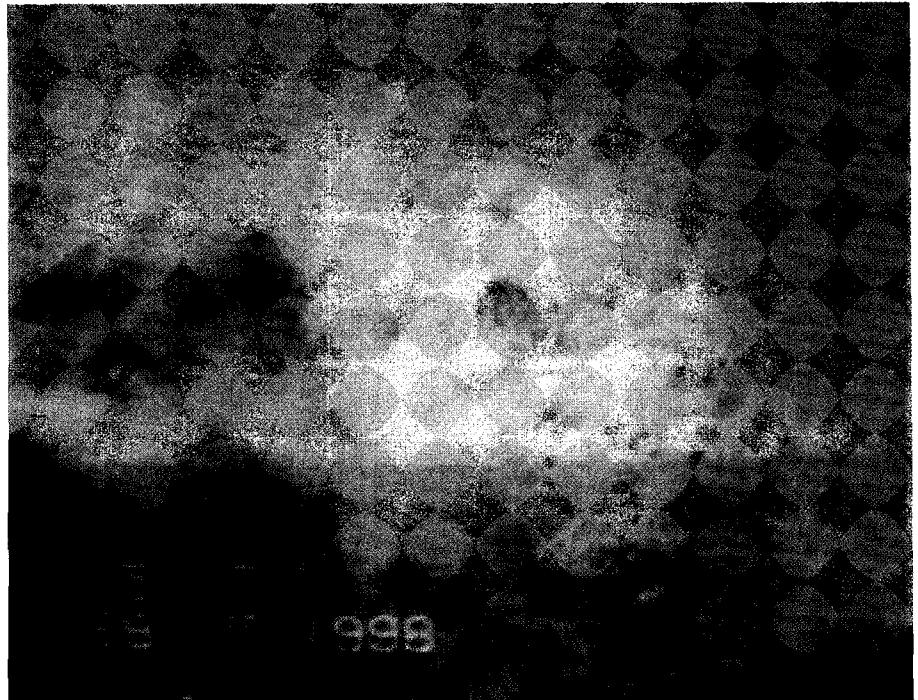
attack never materialized, and May 28 dawned normally for the residents of the great cities on both sides of the border.

That afternoon a small group of Pakistanis associated with the weapons program, including, of course, A. Q. Khan, gathered in a concrete bunker in Chagai, facing the chosen mountain seven miles away. Pakistan later reported that five nuclear bombs had been placed inside the test tunnel where it hooked sharply, 800 feet beneath the mountain's peak. The bombs were fission devices, based on either the Kahuta or the PAEC's design, or both, and containing highly enriched uranium—though a remote possibility exists that a plutonium device was among those tested. The details remain secret. One bomb was said to be large, and four to be small. They were wired to detonate simultaneously—a practical arrangement that has led, however, to endless disputes about how many were actually involved. The official number of five was intended to match India's test exactly—with the special surprise of a sixth bomb tested elsewhere two days later, to one-up the score. The tunnel was sealed with heavy concrete plugs. At 3:15 P.M. a PAEC technician directly under Samar Mubarakmand, the leader of the test site, pushed the button, saying "*Allah-o-Akbar!*"—"God is great." After a delay of thirty-five seconds (during which, it is said, some observers prayed) the mountain heaved, shrouding itself in dust. The command post rocked. When the dust settled, the mountain's color had turned to white. In announcing the news Pakistan claimed a total yield that roughly equaled India's, of course, because if it was to be a response in kind, the numbers had to match. Independent analysts downgraded the actual yield by a factor of three—but so what? As far away as Cairo people danced in the streets.

Khan posed for pictures with the mountain behind him. He looked more subdued than pleased. It should have been his moment, the apogee of his life, and an occasion for the entire nation to praise his name. *Khan-o-Akbar*, people could have said; Islam has its bomb, and Pakistan is saved. Indeed, people did give him thanks, and over the next few years, by external appearance, he rose to new heights of glory and fame. But he was beginning to face serious troubles now—political forces that ultimately would lead to his arrest and disgrace—and a small but clear warning was being sent to him on that day. Control of the test had been pointedly awarded to the treacherous—no, traitorous—PAEC. Munir Ahmed Khan was seven years retired by then, but the institutional rivalry had not eased. Now this Samar Mubarakmand—a PAEC flunky, a carpetbagger, a twit—had been parachuted in to lead the site. It was Mubarakmand who had been given the honor of orchestrating the

event. And Khan had been allowed to visit as a "courtesy."

This treatment continued after Khan flew back to Islamabad. There was no official delegation to greet him. That welcome was reserved for Mubarakmand, who arrived later, and was met by the prime minister and a cheering crowd of hundreds. Khan, in contrast, was met by a small group of friends from the Kahuta plant, who waited for him in the "VVIP lounge," and then drove with him to his house



Pakistani television shows the nuclear test at Chagai shortly after detonation

for tea with Henny. Khan looked haggard, perhaps because the near nuclear war had kept him up the night before, but more likely because of the frustrations of the day. Either way, he was not his normal irrepressible self. One of his companions at the tea recently told me that out of concern he had asked Khan what was going on, and that Khan had not responded. It was a shock, he said, because for once Khan had seemed uncertain.

But looking back now, seven years later, the answer can be known. In Pakistan people understand more than they will ever admit out loud. There are cultural understandings about what goes on, houses on the shores of Rawalpindi's drinking supply. Pakistan had its bomb, and it was a good thing, but the utility of Khan was almost over. He was a genuine patriot, much to be admired, but too strong for anyone's good anymore. If he had become a monster, as some said, then some in the government and the army were implicated too. Was he out of control? For the moment he just needed to be reined in, and reminded that he was just one among a number of important men. Khan's activities were if anything about to expand. But it was only 1998, and there was no thought yet that he would have to be destroyed. ▀

This is the first of two articles about A. Q. Khan and the spread of nuclear technology.

REUTERS

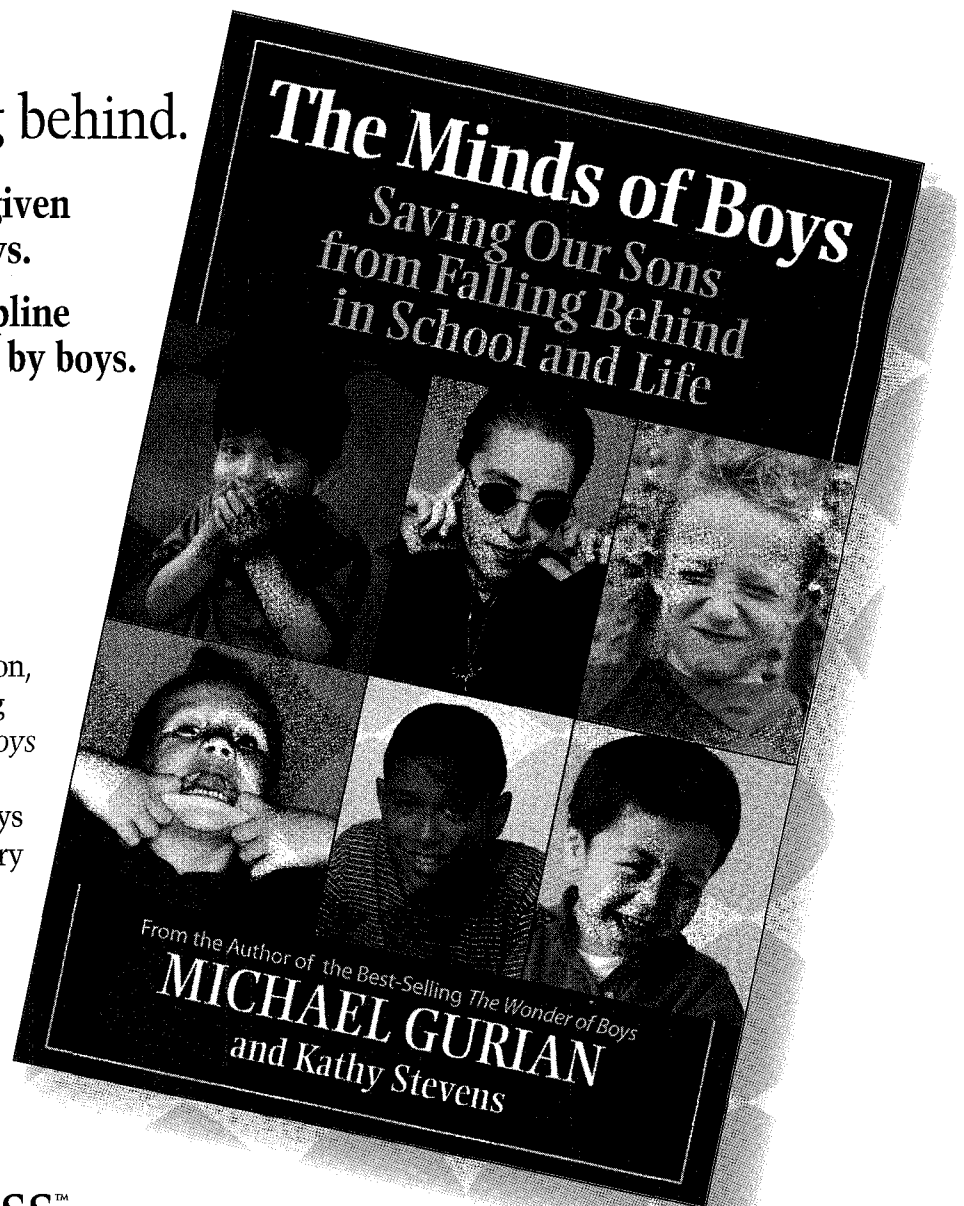
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THE GREATEST STORIES NEVER TOLD

Some of the most delicious unpublished journalism gets passed around like a secret handshake

BY ALEX BEAM

Illustration by Marc Rosenthal

.....

In the former Soviet Union there was a literary genre called *samizdat* (the word means “self-published” in Russian) that consisted of subversive political manifestos and unsanctioned—that is, good—poetry and fiction, circulated only in typescripts, painstakingly reproduced by volunteer typists who smashed their keys through four or five sheets of carbon paper at a time. Famous typescripts never published in the USSR included Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago*.

Recently I was talking about *samizdat* to my friend the sportswriter Charles Pierce. Charlie knows a lot about many different subjects; once when I let slip that I was writing about the impossibly obscure General Smedley Butler, he piped up, “Oh, yeah—the guy they tried to hire for the anti-FDR coup.” So it came as no surprise that he had a *samizdat* typescript in a drawer. But I was surprised when he started to quote from it from memory: “Ladies and gentlemen, here they are ... Morganna!”

Charlie’s recollection of the *Sports Illustrated* writer Curry Kirkpatrick’s lengthy, unpublished profile of Morganna Roberts turned out to be quite accurate. Roberts is the stripper turned “kissing bandit” who during the 1980s leaped onto major-league baseball fields to buss players great and small. “The first five hundred words were just about her breasts,” Charlie still recalls.

“It was meant to be a ‘bonus piece,’” Kirkpatrick told me, speaking by telephone from his home in Hilton Head, South Carolina, referring to occasional extra-long articles the magazine would publish. “It was about ten thousand words long. I cleaned it up a lot, but there was still no way they were going to run it. I’m not sure why they even okayed my doing it in the first place.” He eventually sold a shorter version of the article to *Playboy*, but not before his typescript had circulated widely within the sportswriting fraternity. The “ebony-haired ecdysiast” was irresistible copy, especially when it came to her sixty-inch chest. In the article Roberts

wrote that her undergarments were custom-made by the man “who builds domed stadiums.”

There is a lot of *samizdat* around. You just have to know where to look.

A friend of mine at *The Wall Street Journal* once showed me a never published feature story on the Chicago entrepreneur James McBride, better known as “Mr. Skin.” McBride operates a seamy Web site that alerts teen video renters to scenes of exposed (female) flesh—critical information for the *Porky’s* and *American Pie* set. For a nominal fee you can view film clips of, say, an undraped Helen Mirren cavorting in the 1999 classic *The Passion of Ayn Rand*.

The *Journal* reporter James Bandler’s diligently researched article revealed that McBride, who operates on the fringes of the entertainment industry, is pampered by the studios, because a “Skintastic” rating on his Web site spurs rentals. How could the *Journal* keep this important story out of print? “We had just published a front-page story about Snoop Dogg’s porn movie, *Doggystyle*,” one staff member explains. “We wouldn’t publish two articles like that, back to back, in a thousand years.”

Soon after running my eyes over Mr. Skin, I encountered another piece of *samizdat*. Written by Thomas Faragher, my colleague at *The Boston Globe*, it reproduced the Gettysburg Address as if the speech had had to pass through the meat grinder of the *Globe*’s main copy desk. I’d just had one of my own harrowing experiences with those ferocious editors, and the parody rang true.

Fourscore and seven years ago (can’t we just make it 87 years ago?) our fathers (WHO ARE THEY?? Any mothers???) brought forth on this continent (North America?? Northern Hemisphere??) a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men (people, men and women, what???) are created equal. (Why don’t we just say they founded the United States and leave it at that? Pacing’s better.)

Alex Beam is a columnist for The Boston Globe.

Back when Russian dissidents were churning out real *samizdat*, a young writer at *The New York Times* seized on the harmonic convergence of two disparate journalistic events. One was *The Washington Post*'s publication, and eventual retraction, of Janet Cooke's 1981 Pulitzer Prize-winning portrait of an eight-year-old heroin addict, titled "Jimmy's World" ("Jimmy is 8 years old and a third-generation heroin addict, a precocious little boy with sandy hair, velvety brown eyes ..."). Sadly for the *Post*, Jimmy turned out not to exist.

The other was among the most famous *Times* corrections ever, following the food writer Betty Fussell's description of the chef Michel Fitoussi's palate-popping presentation of "a live Muscovy duck." The *Times* revealed that "in preparing [the dish], Mr. Fitoussi uses a duck that has been killed." The Dadaist clarification provided the title for a book edited by Linda Amster and Dylan McClain: *Kill Duck Before Serving: Red Faces at The New York Times: A Collection of the Newspaper's Most Interesting, Embarrassing and Off-Beat Corrections*.

The work of *samizdat* the correction inspired, "Daffé's World," became legendary in the *Times* newsroom.

Daffé is 8 months old and a third-generation stuffing addict, a precocious little Muscovy mallard with sandy tufts, velvety brown eyes and wire marks freckling the baby-smooth feathers of his thin brown wings and legs.

He nestles in a large, silver serving platter in the dining room of his comfortably furnished restaurant ...

Although not known as a temple of frivolity, the *Times* has produced at least one other underground typescript: four parodies dating from the 1980s of so-called "color leads," the folksy, anecdotal first paragraphs in newspaper stories that come in and out of vogue. This was perhaps the best:

DALLAS, Nov. 22—Elvira Brown's aging face seems almost to be a map of the parched, weatherbeaten Texas countryside that has been her home for 83 years. Through the eyes that squint in the harsh sunlight, she has seen Dallas grow from a tiny cowtown into a midland capital. The street outside of her tiny house used to be nothing more than a dust trail in summer and a mudhole in winter.

Years ago, she would sit on this porch and watch cattle drives pass. Today, a procession of quite a different sort passed along the now-paved course.

It was a motorcade. It flew by at top speed on its way to Parkland Memorial Hospital. Top speed, because, it seems, the President of the United States was inside. And he was dead.

The leads whisked through the newsroom faster than ... well, really fast. "It was terrifying," the metropolitan reporter David Dunlap, since revealed to be the talented wiseacre, remembers. "By the end of the afternoon Abe Rosenthal [then the editor] himself had been shown them." As a friend of mine who savored off-color limericks about Leonid Brezhnev's daughter—supplied by British intelligence—when he enjoyed a top security clearance once opined, "The narrower the audience, the more potent the satire."

Almost every newspaper or magazine generates tiny gems that circulate clandestinely. *New Republic* staffers remember "Marty's Nightmare Table of Contents," listing stories that the editor and publisher Martin Peretz would least like to see in print. (No one has a copy, so I am left to imagine the headlines: "Israel Cedes West Bank, Jerusalem; 'The Arabs Were Here First,' Sharon Admits.") Some at *The New York Review of Books* have held on to faded copies of a February 10, 2000, letter to the editor from Theodore John Kaczynski, "04475-046 U.S. Penitentiary Max," better known as the Unabomber. In three neatly handwritten pages Kaczynski commented on an exchange of letters about psychoanalysis, asserting, inter alia, that "it would be surprising if the field had reformed itself in a sufficiently fundamental way to become a genuine science." The letter was never published.

The wits at *The New Yorker* naturally generated much material for what Ivan Turgenev, facing czarist censorship, called "the desk drawer." A classic example is the forty-five-page "Sophiegimbel book," formally titled *Style: A Mnemonic Narrative in Twenty-Six Chapters With Epilogue*. *Style* was a send-up of the magazine's talmudic stylebook, which until the early 1990s could be viewed only by a select group of staffers. A typical injunction was "Indicate a proscribed word thus: '---- off,' he said. (hyphens) Do not use asterisks." Spelling was deliciously idiosyncratic: "electric-light bulb," "eyeopener," "eying."

As part of post-William Shawn *glasnost* the copy editor Lindsley Cameron jawboned many colleagues, including Roger Angell, Charles McGrath, and Elizabeth Macklin, into writing twenty-six short stories, each one starring the fictional copy editor "Sophiegimbel." Each story had to use every stylebook entry for a given letter, in the order in which they occurred in the manual. "Sophiegimbel" is itself a *New Yorker* stylebook relic, being the correct spelling of a 1930s trademark for couture made by Sophie Gimbel, who married into the department-store family and cut Lady Bird Johnson's memorable red coat-and-dress combination for the 1965 inauguration. "Miss Gould"—the legendary, recently deceased editor Eleanor Gould Packard—"was the only person who remembered what the word was," the former librarian Craig Smith says.

Style contains literary horseplay galore. "Chapter E for Eros," ascribed to McGrath, inevitably draws attention, as Sophie bares her obsessive affection for "[The] fire of my life, fire of my loins. My boss, my boychik. Will-i-am." (As in Shawn, who had by then been replaced as editor by Robert Gottlieb.)

He was no epicurean. He had the dignity of an Episcopalian and the heat of someone who slept, nude, on the equator. He was smarter than the whole Ervin committee put together, and he knew more words for snow than even the Eskimos.

The copy editor's erotic fantasy knows no bounds.



Sophiegimbel felt herself losing consciousness and she felt or imagined she felt herself and the editor spooned together like a pair of commas, her nipples hardened like the dots of a colon, and there out of the mist loomed a giant exclamation point—an eighteen point screamer—... Sophie could no longer help herself and yes she cried yes and then E-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e!

One *New Yorker* writer wrote an acidulous mock obituary of a colleague's dog. After telling me about it, he asked me not to mention details in this story—feelings were still too raw. The late Veronica Geng penned a drop-dead parody of *The New Yorker's* "forward schedule," listing stories for future issues, and posted it on her door. "It was not seen as a good thing for Veronica to have done," says her former colleague Ian Frazier.

Frazier posted his own *samizdat* in his office: a rejected cartoon that he submitted in the late 1970s, lampooning the "I ♥ New York" campaign, then at its apogee under Mayor Ed Koch. "I did a cartoon of a Cossack chasing a Hasidic Jew and wearing a T-shirt that read 'I ♥ a Pogrom,'" Frazier recalls. "It was too horrible to publish."

Several of Frazier's cartoons were published in the humorist George Meyer's short-lived magazine *Army Man: America's Only Magazine*. For a time in the 1980s Meyer, who later became a writer for *The Simpsons*, was the Random House of American *samizdat*. A never produced film script he wrote for David Letterman had, David Owen wrote in *The New Yorker*, "a second life, in the *Simpsons* rewrite room, where for several years the show's writers would guiltily consult it whenever they were stuck for a joke." While circulat-

ing that script Meyer typed up the first issue of *Army Man*, eight pages long, which he laid out on his bed and printed in editions of 200. "For years, it circulated in *samizdat* on college campuses," wrote Owen, who told me that his profile of Meyer itself circulated in *samizdat* for five years, until a new editor came across it. *The New Yorker's* editor at the time, Tina Brown, commissioned the piece but never ran it. "She thought *The Simpsons* was passé," Owen said.

Army Man was dark and brilliant. It showcased the work of Andy Borowitz, Roz Chast, Merrill Markoe, and many others who went on to fame and fortune in Hollywood and elsewhere. A feature like Frazier's "My Ideal Woman"—a graphic description of a man—would be impossible to reproduce anywhere except in a rental apartment in Boulder, Colorado, in 1988. In its second issue *Army Man* teased a major upcoming feature: "Mother Teresa, the Nun You Love to Hate." This was four years before Christopher Hitchens first put the paddle to the beloved Catholic saint-in-waiting in his notorious 1992 *Nation* column "The Ghoul of Calcutta."

A reprintable example of Meyer's humor would be his list of Chapter 11 filings: "Tommy's Resume Servise. Nite-Owl Skywriting Co. The Pink Pork Chop." And so on.

More typical would be this "Jolly Comedy Joke" from John Swartzwelder, who also became a writer for *The Simpsons*: "DISGRUNTLED MAN AT BREAKFAST: They can kill the Kennedys. Why can't they make a cup of coffee that tastes good?"

Another much admired typescript handed around by the *Army Man* clique was Harry Shearer's relentless fifteen-round pummeling of Jerry Lewis's muscular-dystrophy tele-

thon. The piece was commissioned by Clay Felker's magazine *New West* in 1976. At various points in the article Shearer (whose credits include several voices on *The Simpsons*) mentions how Lewis's factotums kept trying to usher him away from the center of the telethon action. It appears in retrospect that they should have tried harder, in order to keep observations like these out of circulation:

Nobody causes muscular dystrophy, and almost nobody gets it.

The day before the show, [Jerry] did a promo with a fat lady from Channel 8 in Honolulu and concluded it by yelling, "Watch the show and getta hunka nooky."

Every Muscular Dystrophy telethon ends with Jerry's singing "You'll Never Walk Alone," a peculiar choice of songs to address to crippled people.

New West "bumped it for a Mary Murphy profile of Dino DeLaurentis (key detail—he falls asleep on a transatlantic

PANEL AT THE PRESS CLUB

She who had most trouble saying anything
at all, expressionless in her blue blazer
and white silk shirt and sipping her glass of water
and looking away, eyes far from everything,

she who knew firsthand, what was it she was thinking?—
the others' earnest voices rang out eerily
sommnambulant, equivocating over "enemy,"
tongues to a high gloss polishing

"freedom," "casualty," "most regrettably,"
"that's where the force comes in"—but what was it
she was thinking—remembering, maybe,
how during the bombardment she sat

hunched in her apartment, watching water
tremble, slosh, ripple, smooth over,
until the next shock wave through I-beams
rises, fish darting into her aquarium's

corners, ornamental blue crests wavering,
striped gills fluttering, fins twitching
to explosions rolling through what
she called, betraying no emotion, "rocket streets"?

—TOM SLEIGH

Tom Sleigh is the author of five books of poems, including Far Side of the Earth and The Dreamhouse. His collection of essays, Interview With a Ghost, will be published next year.

flight, his head in her lap)," Shearer remembers. "I guess I sent a bunch of copies around, trying desperately to get it published somewhere. A lot of people read it"—both before and after he managed to sell the piece as an insert to *Film Comment* in 1979.

Video killed the radio star, and *samizdat* has been overtaken by technology. It has gone digital.

Cases in point: Years ago sportswriters regaled one another with transcripts of bootleg tape recordings of the profession's most notorious interviews. Exhibit A is the Chicago Cubs manager Lee Elia's tirade in the midst of a 1983 losing streak: "If they're the real Chicago BLEEPin' fans, they can kiss my BLEEPin' BLEEP right downtown ..." Exhibit B is the Los Angeles Dodgers coach Tommy Lasorda's 1976 assessment of Dave Kingman's three-homer outing against his team: "What the BLEEP do you think is my opinion of it? I think it was BLEEPing BLEEP. Put that in, I don't give a BLEEP."

Those interviews and others can be heard on the Internet in less time than it takes to read this sentence.

Michael Kinsley, then the editor of the online magazine *Slate*, discovered the reverberating power of the Internet when he sent what he thought was a private message to his friends and colleagues on July 12, 1998, titled "My Career as Editor of *The New Yorker*." Kinsley laid out in embarrassing detail a meeting with *The New Yorker*'s owner, Si Newhouse, who eventually chose Kinsley's rival David Remnick to succeed Tina Brown. Within a few days the letter had been read by almost every journalist in America. "I sent it to everyone I knew," one recipient says. It was one of the first recorded instances of viral gossip with e-mail as the vector.

Similarly, *The Wall Street Journal*'s Middle East reporter, Farnaz Fassihi, sent an e-mail to a few friends last year that immediately became one of the most-read dispatches from Iraq. ("Being a foreign correspondent in Baghdad these days is like being under virtual house arrest ...") "The e-mail was a private correspondence to my friends and not meant for publication," Fassihi told me. "It was shocking and overwhelming to see it snowballing around the world as it did."

Samizdat is no longer a matter of punching typewriter keys through recalcitrant carbons and hoping the neighbors don't tip off the KGB. Now self-publishing is waking up in the morning, turning on your computer, and sharing your thoughts with the hypothetically limitless audience of the Internet. The San Francisco-based consulting firm Technorati recently estimated that the number of digitally published Web diaries, or blogs, almost doubled in the first half of this year, from 7.8 million to 14.2 million.

Forget writing for "the desk drawer." Forget mailing copies of your unpublishable work around to your friends. To paraphrase Yogi Berra ("Nobody goes there; it's too crowded"), so many people are doing it, it's hardly worth doing at all. ■

HER DAUGHTER

"Charred dove, nightingale still burning"

—MIRZA GHALIB

.....

Baghdad, April 8, 2003

Four years younger than mine,
her daughter lies under the rubble.

She stands at the edge of it,
watching the men lifting one stone,

another, till out of the crater
they gently lift somebody's

body, a body she now
sees is female. She tries to recall

what her daughter was wearing,
but no scrap of clothing remains

on it. Whose body is it? She sees
no face. She sees no head.

At the edge of the crater she stands
while they swaddle the body in blankets

a neighbor has brought. Through
the blasted streets she calls

a name that gets lost
in the rattle of gunfire, a name

no one hears as they pull
from the rubble her daughter's

head, hair twisted round like
a root-wad, not blonde

like my daughter's, not waking
up as my daughter will be, being safe

on this morning in Texas, beginning
to brush her hair after her shower,

her face in the mirror as perfect as
always I see it, the fair skin

she wishes had South Asian
dusk in it, not southern

sun from the fields of her mother's
line, as she examines

the scar on her temple,
the chin she believes looks

not quite smooth
enough, while her fingers

scroll over its surface
as if they are translating

Urdu, word after
unsteady word of a ghazal

that she must recite
today, all the while fearing

her voice will fail
even as she tries

to fill up the silence
with Ghalib's desire

to see, lost in the blaze
of the mirror

that holds her,
the face of the Beloved.

*Kathryn Stripling Byer has published
five books of poems, including Wake and
Wildwood Flower, which received the Lamont Poetry
Prize. She is currently the poet laureate of North Carolina.*

—KATHRYN STRIPLING BYER

NO ORDINARY TOME

Team of Rivals, Doris Kearns Goodwin's much anticipated book about Abraham Lincoln, marks her return to the arena after a devastating scandal. Throughout her personal trials, Goodwin says, Lincoln himself proved to be a major source of consolation. "His whole philosophy was not to waste precious energies on recriminations about the past"

BY THOMAS MALLON

Photograph by Mark Ostow

.....

The "Local Authors" section of the Concord Bookshop slyly puts Emerson, Thoreau, and Louisa May Alcott in front of the browser, who has probably come to the old Massachusetts town to see the "rude bridge that arched the flood" back in April of 1775. This is the essential small town of the American Revolution, but as any visitor soon discovers, and as the bookshop display confirms, the Civil War sits upon it much more righteously. John Brown twice, in 1857 and 1859, came to raise funds at the town hall, and Emerson, who gave the rude bridge its poetic description, was in the audience both times, looking not back but forward, to wherever the abolitionist tide would soon be taking the town and the country. In its later eagerness to remember those who died in the War of the Rebellion, Concord managed to raise its monument—a large obelisk that still dominates the town square—before the year 1866 was out.

It has taken Doris Kearns Goodwin ten years, about a third of the time she's lived in Concord, to raise up her monumental study of Abraham Lincoln and his Cabinet, *Team of Rivals*. She first came out here to pick apples while a graduate student at Harvard in the 1960s, a time that brought her fatefully together with Lyndon Johnson, first as a White House fellow and then as a confidante and biographer. But today when she refers to the "sixties" she's likely to be talking about the decade of Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, not John Kennedy and LBJ. The "fifties," similarly, is now the time of Kansas-Nebraska, Dred Scott, and the caning of Charles Sumner, the decade in which her Concord home was built and the United States became a house divided.

Goodwin remains the approachable historian next door, the television commentator once described as "the one with the normal hair." Her childhood nickname, "Bubbles," bestowed because of her effervescent storytelling, still fits too, and yet there's a careworn fragility to her physical presence: an extreme

thinness, eyes that will suddenly go wide and wan. In the fall of 2005, three years after a devastating scandal, she is operating under a double and paradoxical burden: Has her ten years' labor given us anything *different* from what's in the hundreds of other Lincoln books stored floor-to-ceiling in her home? And even if so, has she given proper deference, and citation, to all the scholarship within them?

Team of Rivals begins with a truth that Frederick Douglass held to be self-evident as early as 1876: "The whole field of fact and fancy has been gleaned and garnered. Any man can say things that are true of Abraham Lincoln, but no man can say anything that is new of Abraham Lincoln." In fact, at the time Douglass spoke, only the first geologic layer of Lincoln literature had begun depositing itself upon the historical and popular consciousness. Anecdote and apologia—including the reminiscences of William Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, and the life jointly written by his personal secretaries, John Hay and John Nicolay—would continue to pour out for decades. For much of the twentieth century Carl Sandburg's loud, circus-tent hagiography would dominate the field, its vast American audience only sometimes drawn away by the mature, unsentimental studies of scholars such as J. G. Randall and David H. Donald. Beveridge, Thomas, Oates: almost every year brings another. At times the student of Lincoln almost thinks he hears them singing the old Union volunteers' song: "We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more!"

Was Goodwin intimidated by their endless ranks? "Oh, surely at the start," she told me in the first of my two interviews with her, at her home in Concord. "Oh, there's no question." But she "put that panic in abeyance for a while," introduced herself to the community of contemporary Lincoln scholars ("enormously welcoming"), and faced the simple fact that she "wanted to do Lincoln," which meant "wanting to

Thomas Mallon is a contributing editor of The Atlantic. His most recent book is the novel Bandbox.



live with this subject, wanting to go back into the past and learn about the nineteenth century, which I didn't know much about." Besides, "there wasn't anywhere else to go," no other figure or period of such engrossing magnitude, she decided after winning a Pulitzer Prize for writing *No Ordinary Time*, about Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Second World War.

During the last phone call Goodwin ever had from her first subject, Lyndon Johnson, he complained about Sandburg's *Lincoln*, which Johnson was still reading two days before he died. Lincoln just wouldn't come alive for him. "And if that's true for me," he lamented, "one president reading about another, then there's no chance the ordinary person in the future will ever remember me. No chance."

Actually, one can argue that for all its disjointedness, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (1976), Goodwin's youthful, almost coltish book, still succeeds in bringing Johnson psychologically alive; and some comfort derived from that early achievement must have abided in her as late as 2002, when she went from being a media favorite to being the subject of stories with headlines like "No Ordinary Crime" (*Newsweek*).

I came to Concord to talk with Doris Kearns Goodwin mostly about Lincoln, but we both knew that another subject would arise—as it will all along Goodwin's upcoming two-month book tour.

Journalists were already on the plagiarizing trail of the popular historian Stephen Ambrose when they learned that several dozen unmarked quotations from Lynne McTaggart's biography of Kathleen Kennedy, JFK's sister, were present in Goodwin's *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, which had been published in 1987. The duplications, laid out by *The Weekly Standard* and the *Los Angeles Times*'s Peter King, were extensive, serious enough to have necessitated an out-of-court settlement between McTaggart and Goodwin in the late 1980s—not long after Goodwin had told *Publishers Weekly* of her pride in "learning how to craft a book" from her work on *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*. "You read all the relevant material," she told *PW*'s interviewer, "you synthesize all the books, you speak to all the people you can, and then you write down what you know about the period. You feel you own it."

Such blitheness disappeared into contrition when the McTaggart matter came to light. Goodwin explained in *Time* magazine that when she'd been writing footnotes for the Kennedy volume, a few sources did not get "fully

rechecked." "I relied instead," she said, "on my notes, which combined direct quotes and paraphrased sentences. If I had had the books in front of me, rather than my notes, I would have caught mistakes in the first place and placed any borrowed phrases in quotes." This is not a procedure that a bank examiner's daughter could have confessed to with much pride, and Goodwin's normal hair became quickly less evident on television. She would soon enough resume contributing to NBC, but she has never returned to PBS's *NewsHour*.

Doris Kearns Goodwin and I have a lot in common: Catholic childhoods in the burgeoning postwar Diocese of Petropolitana in Insula Longa (the Diocese of Rockville Centre, on Long Island); Harvard; and Lincoln, whose assassination is the central event in my novel *Henry and Clara*. More awkward, I had published a fairly well-known and some would say Draconian book on plagiarism (*Stolen Words*) that was often referred to in discussions of the McTaggart affair. I came to Concord to talk mostly about Lincoln, but we both knew that the other subject would arise—as it will all along Goodwin's upcoming two-month book tour.

During my first visit to her house, in the fall of 2004, she showed me not only the massive chronological ledgers she had constructed for the day-to-day activities of the principal characters in her yet-to-be-completed Lincoln book, but also an enormous binder full of extensive footnotes, which she says she has learned to write contemporaneously with the text. Her anxiety was evident, as it would be on my second visit, this summer, during which she more than once asked to go off the record when the issue of plagiarism came up.

Because Simon & Schuster (her publisher in 1987 and now) is "giving me the space to do it," Goodwin says, the Lincoln footnotes will be "as important as the narrative, as the historical detail, as the veracity of the characters—all the other things that I've always cared so much about." Although criticized for relying too heavily on researchers, she still, without apology, uses them, including Linda Vandegrift, who worked on the Kennedy book. "I never had a 'stable' in the first place," Goodwin says. To avoid errors in transcription she now electronically scans or photocopies sources and has taken care "to double-check and triple-check everything" herself.

"It's interesting," she says. "I think if I'd had to go out on the book tour two or three years ago, I might have felt closer to the event, and it would have been more nervous-making in a certain sense. But you know, at this point I feel really proud of what the book is. I know that certainly I've worked harder on it and put more life force into it than anything I've done before." Lincoln himself has proved a consoling figure; his "whole philosophy," Goodwin says, "was not to waste precious energies on recriminations about the past."

It's unclear to me what recriminations might be in order, or why, but long since sick of the subject of plagiarism

myself, and mindful that everyone seems to discover his own needs in Lincoln's story, I don't resist the let's-move-on spirit of the Second Inaugural Address that hovers over our conversation—not if it will let us proceed to Lincoln himself, about whom Doris Kearns Goodwin has written an enormous book possessed of a friendly grandeur and, against all odds, a considerable freshness.

Having produced a paucity of personal letters and no diaries in an era when public men often composed a surfeit of both, Lincoln—like Shakespeare and Jesus—forces biographers into a greater-than-usual reliance on what contemporaries wrote about him. Their diaries and letters become competing, fragmentary gospels through which the Union's savior is reconstructed into a tentative whole. One sees this oblique method, the alternation of multiple perspectives, again and again in modern depictions of Lincoln, from Gore Vidal's 1984 novel to *We Are Lincoln Men*, the collection of friendship studies with which David H. Donald followed up his 1995 biography.

Goodwin's principal technique for depicting Lincoln is to see him through the rivalrous eyes of three men from whom he snatched the presidential nomination when the Republican Party, minus the contending candidates, gathered at Chicago's Wigwam meeting hall in May of 1860. Having united the Illinois party two years earlier in his distinguished but unsuccessful Senate race against Stephen A. Douglas, and having delivered affecting, closely reasoned speeches about slavery and disunion on recent trips east, Lincoln stood as a largely unobjectionable second choice to New York's William Henry Seward, Ohio's Salmon P. Chase, and Missouri's Edward Bates. But, as Goodwin puts it with a nice sonorousness, "There was little to lead one to suppose that Abraham Lincoln, nervously rambling the streets of Springfield that May morning, who scarcely had a national reputation, certainly nothing to equal any of the other three, who had served but a single term in Congress, twice lost bids for the Senate, and had no administrative experience whatsoever, would become the greatest historical figure of the nineteenth century." The real plans for celebration—bonfires stacked, banners furled—had been made in Auburn, Columbus, and St. Louis, all of whose sons would in the end have to enter history as the "team of rivals" from which Lincoln made his Cabinet.

There's a wonderful, almost comically baleful villain to be had in Chase, the governor of Ohio, though with her typical, genuine niceness, Goodwin tells me she really can't call him villainous, "because I so respect his moral force about emancipation early on, and about racial equality." "But on the other hand," she says, "there's no question that his temperament is so the opposite of Lincoln's that it really shows what Lincoln is made of, in a certain sense." Jealous, puritanical, and tormentedly ambitious—suffused with the egomania of the self-loathing—Chase flogged himself

toward success ("I almost despair of ever making any figure in the world") in the kind of diary that Lincoln didn't keep. A terrible speaker and a man of promiscuous political affiliations (he'd moved from the Whigs to the Liberty Party and then the Free Soilers before throwing in with the Republicans), Chase had earned great respect for the legal strategy with which he had challenged slavery in the 1840s (seeing it as "a creature of state law" and not a national institution"), but his habitual double-dealing made it impossible for the Ohio delegation to unite behind his candidacy.

Chase would become Lincoln's secretary of the Treasury, in which capacity he did a splendid job both of financing the Union army and of getting his own face on the new one-dollar bill. Less inclined than his colleagues to revise an initial underestimation of Lincoln, he operated behind the president's back, repeatedly threatened resignation, and clumsily attempted, from within the Cabinet, to run against Lincoln for the 1864 nomination. Chase's pomposity ("a great change seemed to come over men's minds while I was in Washington") is exceeded only by that of the preening, inert General George B. McClellan.

Goodwin's second prismatic rival is a less well-known if appealing figure, though one who proves to be of limited utility as the book moves forward. Edward Bates, a sixty-six-year-old retired congressman and judge, a prosperous pillar of St. Louis blessed with personal contentment and an "ideal home life," was the most conservative choice before the delegates in the Wigwam, one who would have clear appeal to the Unionists in border states like Missouri. But readers will have trouble believing he was truly a contender amid the antislavery fervor sweeping Chicago.

Even after Bates becomes Lincoln's attorney general, Goodwin has difficulty keeping her attention on him, and strays instead to other members of the Cabinet, especially Edwin Stanton, a combustible, workaholic Quaker who would find himself awash in blood as Lincoln's second secretary of war. Having been overtly contemptuous toward Lincoln when they were teamed as lawyers on a patent case in the 1850s, Stanton had the furthest to travel along the road of re-evaluating his boss. He remained irritated by the president's drollery, storytelling, and theatergoing, but finally experienced an awed, emotional conversion, one his old friend Chase was incapable of undergoing with any completeness.

Next to Lincoln himself, Goodwin's standout figure is Seward, the almost dandyish front-runner for the nomination, whose popularity among abolitionists had been sealed with a prophecy of "irrepressible conflict" between North and South. Inevitably, the New York senator would disappoint them at key moments. His own political realism restrained his antislavery zeal, as did the enforced cautionings of the "Dictator," Thurlow Weed, the Albany editor and boss who had turned the state's Whigs into

Republicans. Yet any reader whose image of Seward's personality derives from his stern expression in period photographs will be surprised to find in Goodwin's pages a fun-filled cosmopolite who had made the acquaintance of Gladstone, Queen Victoria, and the pope well before Lincoln made him secretary of state.

With his supporters thunderstruck that the convention in Chicago had "given us a *rail splitter*" for a candidate, Seward, as irrepressible as the sectional conflict, rallied quickly and campaigned hard for Lincoln. Even so, once in the Cabinet he tried to make himself into the administration's real power, forcing Lincoln to establish dominance with a few shrewd, feline swats. Unexpectedly, the relationship that resulted was not only productive but mutually delightful. Seward's lively household in Lafayette

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Square, across from the White House, became a home away from Lincoln's troubled home, bringing back, Goodwin suggests, "memories of his convivial days on the circuit, when Lincoln and his fellow lawyers gathered together before the log fire to talk, drink, and share stories." The president sought refuge with Seward often enough to make Mary Lincoln jealous, and John Hay, Lincoln's young secretary, would come to marvel over how "the history of governments affords few instances of an official connection hallowed by a friendship so absolute and sincere." Seward may not be Goodwin's protagonist, but in her pages he's as perceptive, flashy, and satisfying as Boswell.

Last fall Goodwin speculated to me that had she stayed in academic life, she might have written a series of smaller books about less titanic figures, studies "in seriatum" of the sorts of Cabinet figures she now calls her "guys." Those books are not the kind that tend to get signed up by Alice Mayhew at Simon & Schuster, but *Team of Rivals* contains, at intervals, the chapters for a tiptop, almost extractable biography of Seward, as vivid as any that's been written.

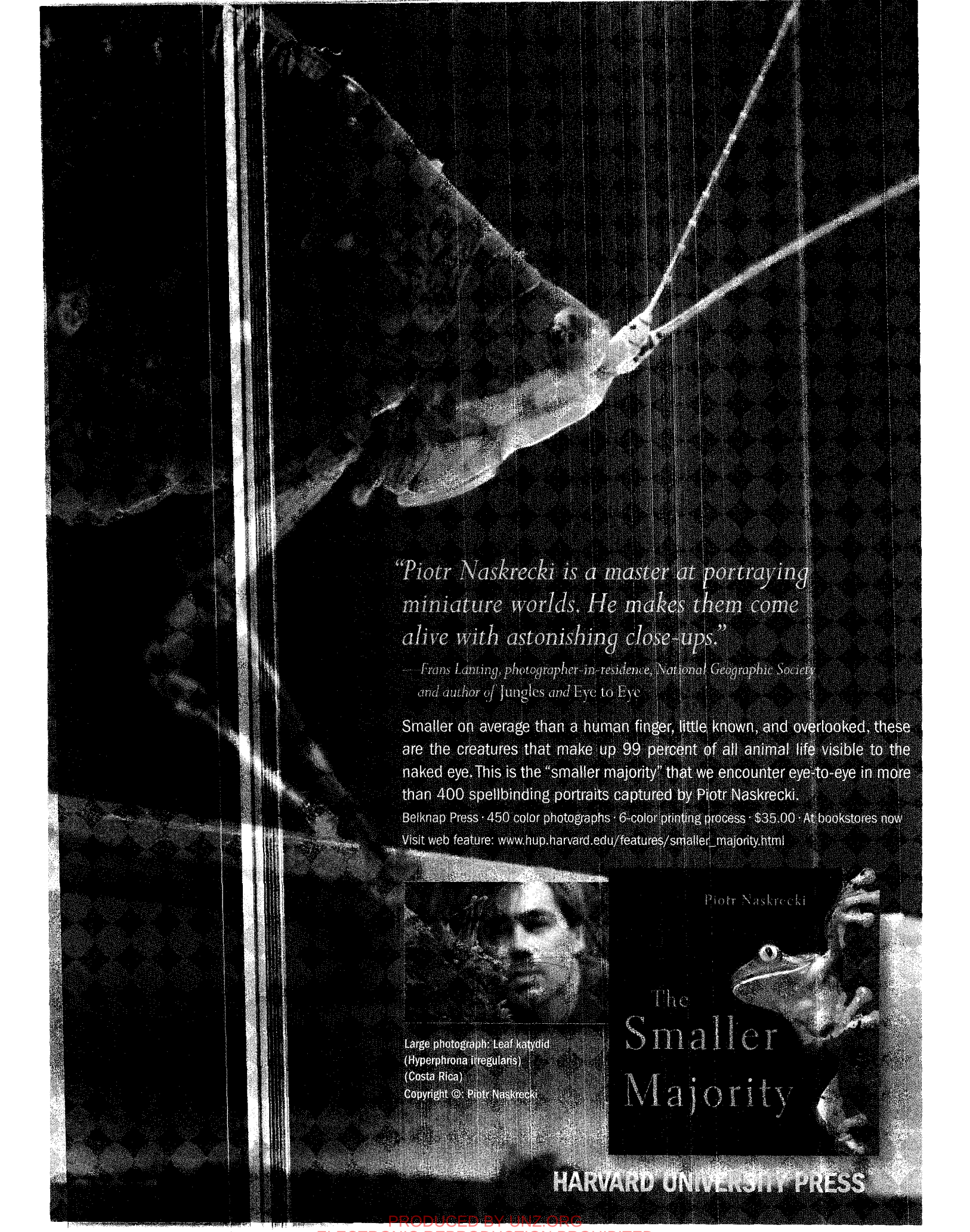
Master Among Men was Goodwin's original title, one that perhaps even more strongly emphasized what remains her principal theme: Lincoln's political genius, a "gift for managing" men that was married to psychological necessity. He won the nomination, she argues, for many reasons: character, hard work, consistency of argument. (Helping to bring the convention to his home state didn't hurt either.)

But Lincoln also won because of the remarkable extent to which he had learned to refrain from turning competitors into enemies—something at which Chase certainly, and Seward to a lesser degree, could not claim success. The Illinois delegation *was* united in Chicago, partly because of the way Lincoln met treachery with friendship after seeing his first Senate campaign, in 1855, heartbreakingly undermined by supposed allies.

Throughout the war his Cabinet would function successfully, even as its members fussed and feuded; Stanton's running of the War Department surpassed even Chase's performance at the Treasury. There are times, however, when Lincoln's management-by-magnanimity—after four years of badmouthing and betrayal, Chase was rewarded with the post of chief justice—seems to border on the masochistic. But Goodwin disagrees when I put the psychological possibility to her: "If the forgiveness were eating away at Lincoln, and not being able to deal with the anger directly was taking certain life force away, then it would be a negative thing; but you don't have the feeling that that's happening with him."

Lincoln could absorb the hurts and slights—suck it up, as we would say today—because he possessed, Goodwin convinces us, the longest possible view. For rewards he would leave himself to heaven; no matter that he didn't believe in its existence. The seraphim he *could* see was posterity, whose deferred approval would be huge. He furloughed soldiers so that they could go home and vote for him, and he was bolstered by their love. But he was after something more permanently enveloping than that, and he came to understand that the Emancipation Proclamation would be his guarantor of immortality. Always self-mocking of his stringy, badly dressed form, he could still imagine it in marble.

Goodwin gives us a man "acutely aware of his own emotional needs," one who managed his melancholy as shrewdly as he did his subordinates. She does not neglect the near-suicidal depression Lincoln sank into in the winter of 1841, though she highlights the political disappointments that contributed to it. She amply supplies us, too, with Mary's moods and behavioral binges, and also the grief both parents suffered over the death of their son Willie, who probably perished, from typhoid fever, in a sort of infectious friendly fire: "The White House drew its water supply from the Potomac River, along the banks of which tens of thousands of troops without proper latrines were stationed." But none of this dominates Goodwin's portrait. "I really do think that the idea of him as a depressed individual has been overstressed," she tells me; too much emphasis on the sad, homely expression has prevented Lincoln's full animation for readers, she believes. In some ways he was "more married to these guys in the Cabinet" than to Mary, she jokes; and it is Goodwin's picture of Lincoln laughing in Seward's parlor that stays with one after all the other lantern slides have been put back into the drawer.



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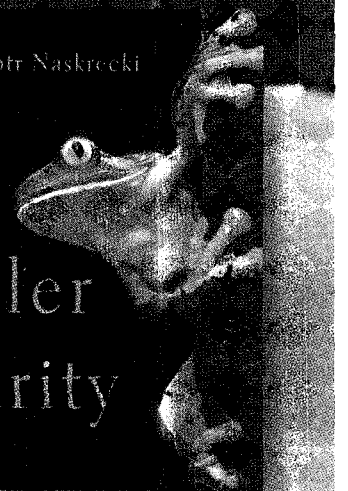
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The
Smaller
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Lincoln-Kennedy “parallels”—some of them bogus, some of them real (“Each president in his thirties married a socially prominent twenty-four-year-old girl who spoke French fluently”)—are an Internet perennial, but Goodwin agrees when I suggest that few more disparate presidential pairs exist than the coolly detached JFK and the tender, mystical Lincoln. “Kennedy wasn’t in my head” while writing this new book, she says. Lyndon Johnson (who’s “always in my head”) shared with Lincoln a passionate need to be remembered, though LBJ’s developed only after he’d attained the presidency, whereas Lincoln had spoken of his as early as his first campaign for the state legislature, when he was twenty-three. The Lincoln parallels to Goodwin’s third former president, Roosevelt, are occasionally temperamental—“They both understood, much more than Lyndon Johnson, the importance of relaxation,” she says—but more frequently managerial: “They both had a magnificent sense of timing.” Each knew how to bring a reluctant public around to his largest aims by picking the media forum that suited him best: Roosevelt’s fireside chats and Lincoln’s public letters, those widely disseminated but intimate-seeming communications that explained his evolving position on slavery.

The books into which Goodwin has put these presidents, at the rate of one a decade, have been decidedly different from one another. *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* remains interesting for the one-of-a-kind, up-close-and-

personal access that produced it, but it’s a ramshackle production, an uneasy blend of journalism, biography, memoir, and political-science study, much of it reflective of Goodwin’s graduate training in Harvard’s government department, where Richard Neustadt (*Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*) was “like a second father” to her. Conversations with Erik Erikson during that same period, and participation in a seminar on the application of psychoanalysis to biography, make themselves overapparent in analyses of Johnson’s dreams and “repetition compulsion.” Goodwin now muses that she was “always, I think, underneath,” a historian, but in the LBJ book she hadn’t yet learned to dramatize the particulars; it’s surprisingly abstract and unanecdotal about Johnson’s Senate career and persuasion strategies.

The Kennedy book may, as she says, have taught her to write narrative, but its cast is so big and its decades so numerous that one can only call it sprawling, with that word’s double edge. It’s *No Ordinary Time* that marked an exceptional advance in technique. Confined to a chronology of five years, Goodwin gave taut shape to a small ensemble cast, opening with artful alternations between Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt on May 10, 1940, while the Nazis are overrunning the Low Countries. Freudian technique is enough subordinated that the Roosevelts emerge as characters, not case studies. The president’s cigarette holder is just a cigarette holder, and it flashes with the rest of the small specifics that the author has learned not only to gather but to set in motion.

No Ordinary Time was the first of Goodwin’s books to offer real literary satisfactions, and it is more or less the template for *Team of Rivals*. If the Roosevelt White House’s second floor sometimes resembled a zany rooming house, Lincoln’s Washington seems a kind of game board over which the president rushes, smoothing the feathers of his exasperating subordinates, his feet or carriage taking him from Seward’s Lafayette Square house to Chase’s new mansion at 6th and E and back to Stanton at the War Department’s telegraph office. There’s a cozy, episodic quality to much of the narrative.

Goodwin’s best thematic achievement may be to give us a clear, accruing sense of why saving the Union—which even the most casual student of American history is taught was the real reason for the war—actually stood as a more transcendent goal than freeing the slaves. Lincoln’s faith in the Declaration of Independence as an international document, one with global promises, is apparent in his utterances long before the Gettysburg Address—including his debates with Douglas in 1858, when he spoke of the Declaration’s bearing on “countless myriads who should inhabit the earth in other ages.” Four years earlier still, noting that the word “slavery” had been excluded from the Constitution, “just as an afflicted man hides away a wen or a cancer,” Lincoln makes evident his view of

LOOSESTRIFE

You have become your name, loosestrife,
 carried on sheep, spurting up out of ballast,
 a cure brought across the deep
 to treat wounds, soothe trouble.
 There have been others like you, the rhododendron,
 the cattails that you in your turn overrun.
 Voices praise your magenta spread, your ability
 to propagate by seed, by stem, by root,
 and how you adjust to light, to soil, spreading
 your glory across the earth even as you kill
 by boat, by air, by land, all before you: the hardy iris,
 the rare orchids, the spawning ground of fish.
 You’ll overtake the earth and destroy even yourself.
 Ah, our loosestrife, purple plague, beautiful us.

—GREG DELANTY

Greg Delanty’s most recent collections are The Ship of Birth and The Blind Stitch. His Collected Poems 1986–2006 will be published next year.

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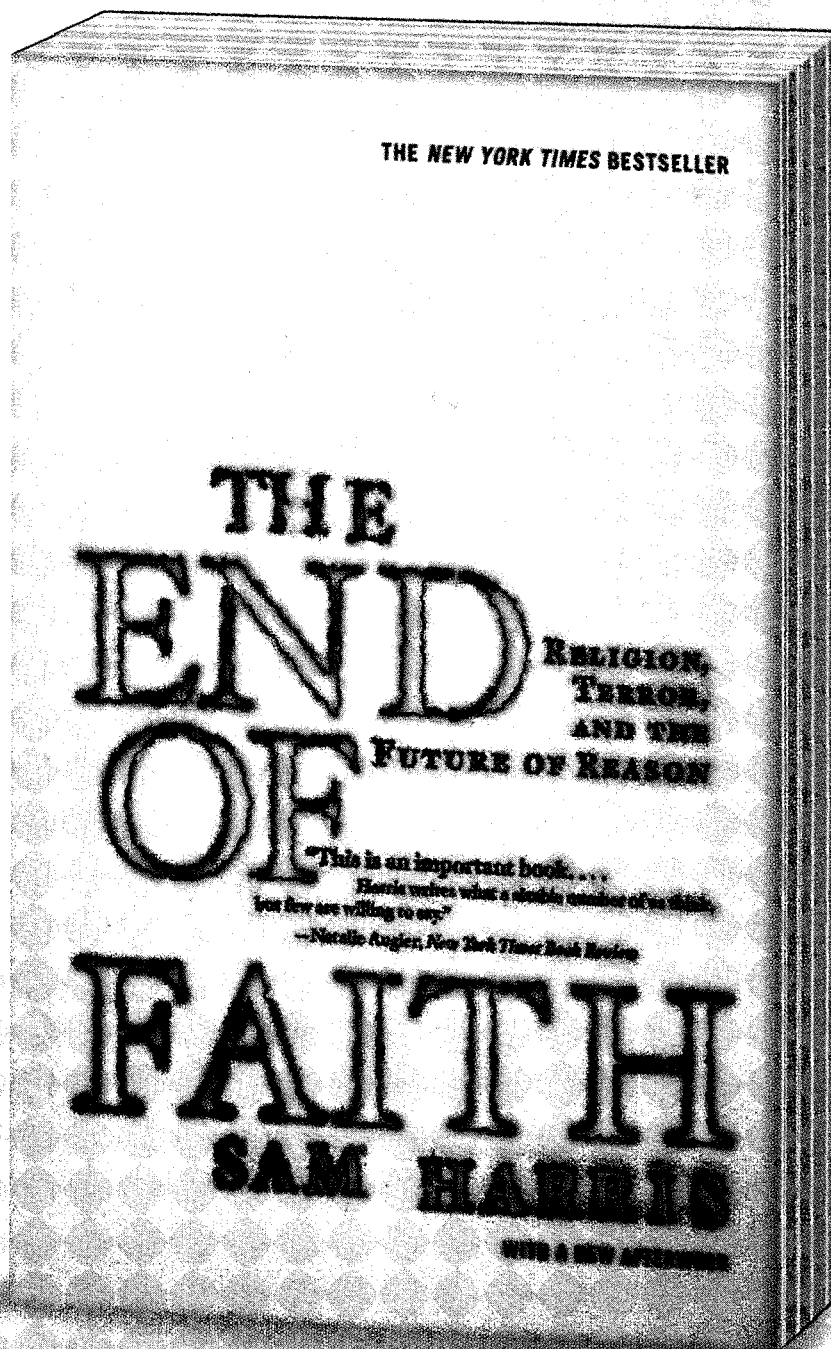
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slavery as something not just shameful but *small*—at least in comparison with the possibility of universal freedom, which depended upon American success. This theme is hardly Goodwin's discovery, but she has infused it into her book steadily and well, giving us a Lincoln appropriate to the present hour and our much proclaimed, much doubted obligation to bring liberty to the whole world.

Goodwin sold the television rights to her Kennedy and Roosevelt books before each was completed, and for the past several years she has been actively involved in Steven Spielberg's plans to make a feature film (probably starring Liam Neeson) from *Team of Rivals*. Her husband, Richard Goodwin, joked to me last fall that his wife needed to speed up, lest Spielberg's movie reach theaters with the credit line "Based on the forthcoming book."

With her wedding to Goodwin, thirty years ago, Doris Kearns married into the first era of history that she wrote about. As a presidential assistant to John F. Kennedy, Richard Goodwin found himself, weirdly, the *New York Times's* featured "Man in the News" on the morning of November 22, 1963. He stayed on at the White House to write Lyndon Johnson's best civil-rights speeches; a pen that LBJ used to sign the Voting Rights Act in 1965 is displayed in the Concord house not far from the Bronze Star that their son Joseph received for service in Iraq.

No book about either of the Presidents Bush seems likely in Doris Kearns Goodwin's future. Theodore Roosevelt is probably the only twentieth-century Republican within her political pale (one had a sense that her heart wasn't fully in her MSNBC commentary on Ronald Reagan's funeral), though she admits to thinking about Ulysses S. Grant as a possible new subject.

Whether or not she follows through with that, she is almost certainly not done with a genre that severely exasperates many academic historians. Presidential biography is the only history that many Americans read, but they read it avidly, pushing the books of David McCullough, Edmund Morris, and Goodwin up the charts, and raising the blood pressure of university scholars marooned in more arcane specialties. In 2001, in a review of McCullough's *John Adams* titled "America Made Easy," Princeton's Sean Wilentz denounced a series of big-selling biographers for supplying "pleasant uplift" instead of reality and rigor. Wilentz tends to equate iconoclasm with seriousness, but it is worth asking if there isn't in fact something inherently sentimental in this presidential genre—an inevitable need to show its protagonist, whatever his mistakes and travails, triumphing on the nation's behalf.

Goodwin admits that confrontation "is not my style at all" (she may be the first person ever to praise both Sandburg's *Lincoln* and Vidal's), but she insists that she knows how to be hard on presidents when they let you down, by, say, interning the Japanese or bombing North Vietnam. Her book on

Johnson taught her, in fact, to be extra critical of a subject: "At a time when I'm at Harvard, the antiwar movement is going on, all the people surrounding me—all my friends and colleagues—*hate* this man, I feel an empathy for him. On the other hand, I'm probably bending over backwards, even though I'm showing the empathy, to talk about his flaws, because that's my other self that's out there ..."

In the case of her current subject, she would point out that she has put Lincoln up against strong men, not straw men. That the man she depicts is "uncommonly tenderhearted" may be emotionally convenient for the strikingly warm Goodwin, but it has a basic truthfulness nonetheless. I'm not sure I would want to turn Goodwin's sympathies on, say, Woodrow Wilson, lest personal feeling claim a larger portion of her focus than the long-term calamitous consequences of a president's good intentions; but cynicism doesn't get anyone very far with Lincoln. If his kindnesses were often shrewd, they were no less kind: "All the things that he did that are the marks of a good man," Goodwin says, "turned out to be those of a great politician." There simply "aren't as many flaws with him as there are with other people." To make an effortful hunt for them is to introduce another kind of distortion: "You wouldn't be true to at least the Lincoln that I saw. That's just reality."

Goodwin's best thematic achievement may be to give us a clear, accruing sense of why saving the Union actually stood as a more transcendent goal than freeing the slaves.

Wilentz dismissed popular historians as purveyors of what he disgustedly called "narrative, narrative, narrative." But that is Goodwin's natural element. Lyndon Johnson, she once argued, equated votes with love; in her own life a connection got made early on between love and storytelling. In the late 1940s, when her father would get home from work, young Doris would reconstruct the Dodgers games she'd heard on the radio. As she explains in her memoir, *Wait Till Next Year* (1997), her recitations instilled in her the "naïve confidence that others would find me as entertaining as my father did." A "Note on Sources" to *No Ordinary Time* delights in her "favorite details" of the Roosevelt saga, and for a historian she uses the word "incredible," at least in conversation, to a peculiar degree. Her editor seems finally to have broken her of a tendency, notable in the Kennedy and Roosevelt books, to dapple the page with exclamation points, but even so, enthusiasm remains evident in the mature style she's achieved, one that's unpretentious and companionable.

Narrative, narrative, narrative: it was one of Lincoln's

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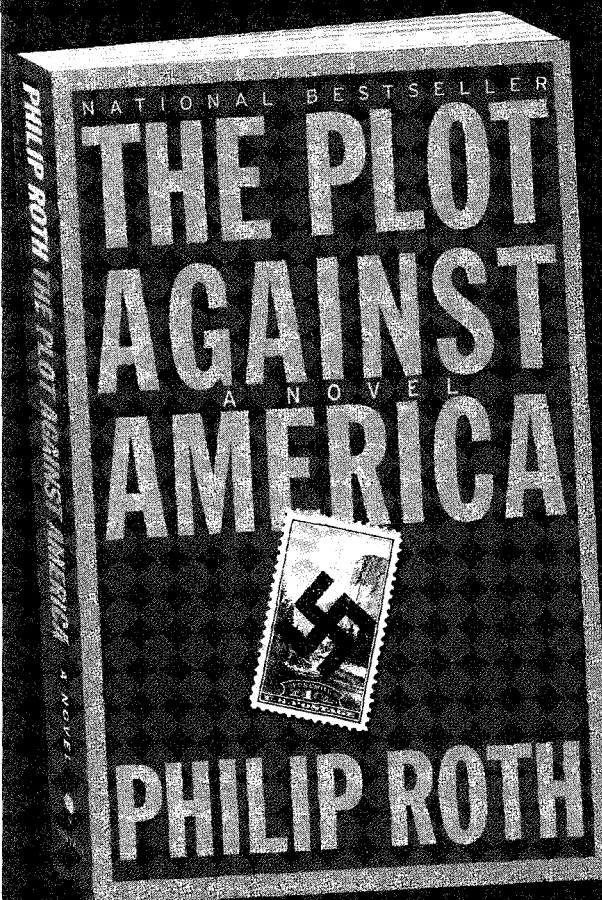
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natural elements too. When he told a story, Goodwin writes, “a rapid illumination of [his] features would be observed.” His little tales, tiresome to those who, like Chase, felt guilty reading fiction, were more than parables designed to persuade. The journalist Henry Villard grasped the power of these stories to “heal wounded feelings and mitigate disappointments” among people who heard them. Their

MIDDAY MIRAGE

(*New Hampshire*)

Scarcely a town that hasn't half
a dozen dozing till the June
sun strikes their bows, these watercraft
that seem to be randomly strewn

in unkempt yards. They're all for sale.
Even the few with outboards still
clamped on appear to be too frail
to rise from trailer-chaises, the drill

of launch and start all but forgot.
They lounge the long midday away.
Up by a house forget-me-nots,
wilting in heat, have overstayed

their reckoning. Slowly someone
scuffs down the drive to drop the price
(four hundred now) on *Honeybun*,
whose namesake's gone. It's like black ice,

he thinks, the asphalt in this light.
Softly he strokes the hull, looks down
the road again: at second sight,
beyond the grass now turning brown,

that patch of glaze melts to a rare
mirage, as instantly their boat
slides off her gurney and they're there
once more, once more at dawn afloat

upon the waters they had fished
for fifty years. That they would go
together was their simple wish;
indifferent, time had shrugged its *no*.

—DAVID SOFIELD

*David Sofield teaches at Amherst College.
His book of poems, Light Disguise, was published in 2003.*

telling is so much a part of Goodwin's book that a reader also begins, perhaps for the first time, to appreciate their compulsive, self-medicating quality for Lincoln himself.

“There was something mysterious in his persona that led countless men, even old adversaries, to feel bound to him in admiration,” Goodwin writes. Attempts to pry Lincoln up from his eternal throne in the nation's capital are as shortsighted as they are fruitless. All who would engage with him have to traffic in his semi-divinity; writers on Lincoln get taken in by resisting it, not by surrendering. In 1866, as Concord was putting up its stone tribute to the war dead, John Hay—a kind of mini-Seward in his merriment and sophisticated tastes—concluded, not implausibly, that “Lincoln with all his foibles is the greatest character since Christ.” According to the biographer Daniel Mark Epstein, even Walt Whitman, one of nature's smothering huggers, “hung back in awe and from a keen artistic instinct” on a number of occasions when he might have shaken Lincoln's hand.

In his days as a trial lawyer Lincoln argued in favor of holding on to Jefferson's idea of George Washington as the perfect American: “It makes human nature better to believe that one human being was perfect, that human perfection is possible.” But Washington's was a perfection of citizenship, a stiff achievement within human limits, comporting with the smooth but blank perfection of his monument—which Daniel Chester French's statue of Lincoln gazes out upon, across the Mall. On February 12, 2009, the next president of the United States will rededicate the Lincoln Memorial as part of the bicentennial celebration of Lincoln's birth. The occasion will call for the first big post-inauguration speech by the forty-fourth chief executive. The new president, standing on the memorial's east steps, will be facing the Washington Monument, but he (she?) will be praying that Lincoln has his back.

In the coming months will Lincoln have Goodwin's? As she travels the country, smiling her way past the knives that are out, one can almost imagine him protecting her with his capacity for seeing transgression in proportion to something better—what he once might have used to shield the returning wayward states from the implacable radicals of Reconstruction. Goodwin in fact may be saved by Lincoln's sheer magnitude, if critical fascination with him trumps schadenfreude over her own still-recent excoriation.

“I am anxious to afford some alleviation of your present distress,” Lincoln wrote at the end of 1862 to the daughter of a friend who'd been killed in battle. His consolations, his urgings, his epistolary loss-cuttings, have been stacked and shelved around Goodwin, nearly walling her in, for years now. When I sat with her in Concord last summer, she showed me, one by one, copies of the pictures that would go into the book, clearly eager to push it over the finish line, just as clearly hesitant to let it go. Abraham Lincoln is a subject to which she's done justice, and he is a subject she needed more than she first knew. ▀

THE NEW JAPANESE SAT

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

TOKYO, April 5—The Education Ministry on Tuesday approved a controversial new series of school textbooks that critics say whitewash Japan's militaristic past ... Some schoolbook publishers and government officials have argued that it is time to remove "self-deprecating" historical references. —The Washington Post



MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. What historically significant event occurred on December 7?

- a.) Woodrow Wilson declared war on Austria, in 1917.
- b.) Admiral William Bligh, of HMS *Bounty* fame, died in 1817, regretting that he never had the opportunity to visit Japan.
- c.) Charles Brooks Jr. became the first American to be executed by lethal injection, in Texas, in 1982.
- d.) U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull flouted diplomatic protocol by speaking in a rude and disrespectful manner to Japanese imperial ambassadors in Washington, in 1941.

2. The cry "Tora! Tora! Tora!" is heard at:

- a.) Pamplona, Spain, to warn runners that a female bull is approaching.
- b.) Ascot, England, to compliment ladies on their hats.
- c.) Synagogues during bat- and bar-mitzvah ceremonies.
- d.) Japanese baseball games when Toshimura Tora (No. 39) steps up to bat.

3. Which of the following statements most accurately describes America's President Franklin Roosevelt?

- a.) A fanatical, Supreme Court-packing bigot intent on ending the Depression by fomenting war with Japan.
- b.) A philandering, wheelchair-bound, stamp-collecting tyrant.
- c.) Invited Imperial Japanese Navy to participate in a "friendship mission" by flying over Hawaii, and then perfidiously ordered U.S. Navy to open fire.
- d.) All of the above.

4. What was the main objective of the Divine Wind Squadron in 1944 and 1945?

- a.) To bring oboe and clarinet concerti to remote areas of the Pacific.
- b.) To entertain the emperor and his court with works by the French *fin-de-siècle* performance artist Le Petomane.
- c.) To win the America's Cup for Japan, despite the New

York Yacht Club's disqualifying Japan's boat for allegedly concealing a Kaiten-type "human torpedo" in its keel.

d.) Parts of all of the above.

5. Historians agree that Japan's doctrine of "pre-emption" in Hawaii was directly responsible for:

- a.) The long-overdue emergence of America as a benign hegemon.
- b.) The development of nuclear power as a promising new energy source.
- c.) The story line of the award-winning

Snow Falling on Cedars.

d.) The drafting of Hideki Matsui by the New York Yankees.

6. The term "comfort women" refers to:

- a.) 200,000 Chinese and Korean females invited to Japan between 1939 and 1945, as honored guests with all expenses paid, for the purpose of experiencing Japanese culture and customs and promoting friendship and understanding.
- b.) Prostitutes in the southern United States.
- c.) Female interns in the White House.
- d.) Wives of Donald Trump.

7. "Bataan Death March" refers to:

- a.) A Seattle grunge band.
- b.) Hole No. 5 at Osaka Golf and Country Club.
- c.) A badly maintained highway west of Manila Bay.
- d.) A lesser-known funereal composition by F. Chopin.

8. What took place at Los Alamos?

- a.) A handful of Americans briefly held off the entire Mexican Army.
- b.) American scientists unearthed prehistoric winged monsters with which to attack an unsuspecting Japan.
- c.) American scientists devised an inexpensive car-rental agency.
- d.) "Good" American Robert Oppenheimer was overcome with remorse after unleashing supernatural evil and was persecuted by the U.S. government for the rest of his life.

FOR EXTRA CREDIT

1. Hirohito : Roosevelt ~

- a.) Jupiter : Pluto
- b.) Joan of Arc : Joan Collins
- c.) Gold : Lead
- d.) Chrysanthemum : Ragweed

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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF TOCQUEVILLE (PART V)

A twenty-first-century pilgrim ends a year-long journey where the seventeenth-century Pilgrims ended theirs—on the coast of New England, not far from where his travels began

BY BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY

Translated by Charlotte Mandell

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AS A BLACK HOLE

The real surprise on the political left in America is that nothing is happening. Not that I claim to have seen everything in such a limited time. But I did meet former members of the Clinton, Gore, and Kerry teams. At the AFL-CIO headquarters I attended a “joint conference” of three organizations designed to extract lessons from the defeat and prepare for battles yet to come. I saw union members and intellectuals, elected officials and strategists, the old and the young. For three days I hunted down the New Democrat, that supposedly developing breed of which, I was told, I could find as many specimens as I liked in Washington.

The results, I’m afraid, didn’t measure up either to my hopes or—far more serious—to what anyone might reasonably expect given the quality, intensity, and strength of the ideological argument mounted by the right.

At the end of my inquiry I found:

1. Sixty-year-old “young” Democrats whose arguments date back if not to the Kennedy years, then at least to the centrist wave that elected Bill Clinton. Thus Al From (of the Democratic Leadership Council) and Will Marshall (of the Progressive Policy Institute) spent two hours selling me on the merits of a “third way,” which I am convinced they would have described in exactly the same terms twenty years ago.

2. Very peculiar progressives whose only concern seemed to be to persuade the visitor—hence, I imagine, the voter—that they shouldn’t accept lessons on patriotism, religion, or morality from anyone, least of all their opponents. “The heartland of America is us,” is basically what John Podesta, formerly the White House chief of staff, now the head of the Center for American Progress, told me. The Bible, religious faith, the crusade for family values—all that is us too, and letting others monopolize it is simply out of the question. When the Lewinsky affair was brought up, and

the key role it played, in my opinion, in America’s swerve to the right; when I told him that the founders of MoveOn.org held the same prejudices as their enemies on this question and almost condemned the former president, I beheld the extraordinary spectacle of the grand adviser blushing like a baby, laughing nervously like a maiden aunt, and replying that perhaps Clinton had committed a “blunder.”

3. More radical left-wingers, people like Michael Moore, who at least understand that the only way the Democrats can break out of the mess they’re in is to take the initiative, construct a world view that’s distinct from the Republicans’, and stop all their whining that they’re good guys too, and that the lowest rates of divorce and teen pregnancy are in the blue states. But here the problem is in the rhapsodic—or worse, populist—flavor of a far too abstract radicalism. And when the question of Iraq is brought up, and—beyond Iraq—the role of America at large, the problem is also a certain pacifism that has a whiff of isolationism, difficult to distinguish from the isolationism of someone like Pat Buchanan.

4. People who supposedly fight for their ideas: activists who explain that they have only one objective, to regenerate the ideological substance of their party; heads of think tanks who, as genuine or feigned progressives, as people who are nostalgic for moral order or who advocate steering away from it, present themselves as ideologues and assure you that their aim is to vanquish the right, and especially the neo-conservatives, on the battlefield of doctrine. But when

you push them a little, when you ask them what their time-line is and, within this time-line, what their tactical or strategic priorities are, their only common ground is talk about ... money!

During the presidential campaign I had already observed this phenomenon. I had noticed the frequent press releases that informed us, day after day, like so many victory bulletins,

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about the status of the party's finances. I had seen how, here, money is the very sign and symptom of excellence, whereas in France money is What Must Above All Never Be Discussed.

But now the campaign is over. Now is the time for reconstruction. So let me take the instance of this joint conference. I'll choose those three hours of debate in which the participants, myself included, were meant to question one another about the profound reasons for the increased electoral turnout that occurred during Bush's re-election.

The fact is that two thirds, maybe three quarters, of the speeches were devoted to talking not about "party lines," not even about "communication" or "advocacy," but about marketing, fundraising, the relative merits of the ceremonies financed by the Republicans or the Democrats, the role of the Internet. The fact is that these brilliant pioneers who were supposed to set down the cornerstones for the people's house of tomorrow had only one idea, one obsession, and, fundamentally, one watchword: how, in four years, to fight the Republicans on the battlefield of fundraising ...

I have nothing against money as such. And there's a part of me that doesn't hate the complex-free, offhanded manner Americans have of approaching the subject.

Yet on that day, I wanted to hear about something else. I looked for speeches about why this money should be raised. I yearned for one voice, just one, to articulate the three or four major issues that, given the current debate and balance of power, might constitute the framework of a political agenda. A defense of the Enlightenment against the creationist offensive. A Tocquevillian revolution extolling certainly not atheism but secularism, and maintaining the separation of church and state. A new New Deal for the poorest of the poor. An uncompromising defense of human rights, and a rejection of the "exceptional" status of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo.

No.

Money, and then money yet again. Money, the index and criterion of all things. The hypothesis, the axiom, according to which, in order to win the battle of ideas, you first have to win the battle of money.

An observer—someone who, like me, was struck by the vigor of the neo-conservative awakening and was expecting to see at least its equivalent on the other side—senses a trap in the process of closing. For a long time the Republican Party was the party of money. For a long time the Democrats repeated, "We have ideas, but you have money, and that's why you win."

Today a turnaround—or, rather, a trick of history—has occurred, and all of a sudden the two camps are struggling on opposite fronts: a right wing of money but also of ideas, which in twenty years has renewed its ideological supplies; and a left wing that, by dint of wanting to compete on the battlefield of money, is in the process of losing its footing on the ground of ideas, and thus of losing, period.

DOING AWAY WITH JUNK POLITICS

We are always a little ashamed, Baudelaire wrote, of mentioning names that won't mean anything to anyone in fifty years.

In the case of David Brock the shame is redoubled.

First of all because you won't need fifty years, or twenty, or even ten, to see this name disappear from American political memory. But also because the character himself is in many respects one of the most objectively loathsome I've met in the ten months I've been traveling through this country.

He is a little over forty years old. Dark brown hair, smug good looks, thin wire-rimmed glasses. The well-defined square jaw of a tennis pro. Yet in the corners of his mouth; in the self-satisfied bitterness of his smile; in his morose, fugitive glance; last, in his odd complacency in not sparing any detail of his shadowy past, there is something that makes me deeply uneasy.

Here is his story, as he tells it to me.

This is the guy that a Republican lawyer summoned to Arkansas in 1994, to offer him, keys in hand, the so-called secrets of Bill Clinton's bodyguards. He is the journalist who, based on these cobbled-together pieces of information, gave *The American Spectator* the article (titled "His Cheatin' Heart") that launched the whole affair of Clinton's sex scandals.

But after he'd done his dirty work, and the president was crucified and his private life spread out on all the American networks and throughout the world; after the delayed-action bomb had been thrown that would poison the political life of the country for a decade; then he regretted what he had provoked, and made it his new specialty—on all the airwaves, in the columns of all the newspapers, in an interminable, conceited memoir that immediately became a best seller, in a thundering letter of excuse to Clinton himself, published in *Esquire*, in which he asked forgiveness for wanting "to pop [him] right between the eyes"—to declare his shame, his very great shame, and he went over to the Democratic Party to which he had done so much harm, but which he wanted thereafter, cross his heart, to serve with all his remaining strength.

Now, in this Washington office where he receives me and where, since his conversion, he has set up Media Matters for America, an agency that works against Republican disinformation, and which he created with the help of a handful of Democratic sponsors, here again is this theatrical way of covering his head with ashes. The impression I get comes across like this: I invented facts ... I rigged information ... I'm a faker ... I have no honor ... In this affair I did just what I did ten years earlier, to that poor Anita Hill ... I didn't even care about the rules of my profession but about fame ... not even fame, but money ... just money ... the lure of a reward ... Now I regret it ... Oh! I so regret it ... There is not enough time left in my life to redeem myself, to ask for forgiveness, to grovel at the feet of my new friends, hoping they'll one day forgive me ...

Just think, say the bigwig Democrats who recommended

that I see him, for whom the winning over of such an individual is obviously perceived, even today, as a godsend—an apostate! A renegade! Someone who comes to us with, in his beggar's bundle, the stuff, the secrets, the list of the enemy camp's dirty tricks! The ideal political spy! The most valuable of turned spies! He was in the heart of the machine, had close contact with the Beast, and he's just abandoned it all! You can't get much better than that, can you?

For me, this man is the embodiment of a manner of acting not just in journalism but in politics, a manner that has undeniably gained widespread acceptance and that, over time, has turned into one of the country's ways of life. In the beginning, Clinton; then the gossip about Gore's mental health; then the scurrilous rumors making Tom Daschle an agent of Saddam Hussein; then, more recently, the ads by the so-called Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, the 527 group

When you push a little, when you ask them what their tactical or strategic priorities are, their only common ground is talk about ... money! Here money is the very sign and symptom of excellence, whereas in France money is What Must Above All Never Be Discussed.

aiming to sully Kerry's military past. I won't go into all that, obviously; I'll also pass over the cases—for there were several—in which the Democrats, through their own 527s, tried their hands at this base game. But in the end, the example is there: each time, it's the same combination, expertly applied, of insinuation, gross lies, and media hype; each time, it's personal attacks and manhunts instead of the exchange or clash of ideas. Step by step, it's a degrading of public debate, of which I know no equivalent in any other democracy, and which, all in all, is profoundly worrisome.

A modest suggestion, then, from a reader of Tocqueville who cannot forget and doesn't want to forget that this is the same America that invented modern democracy. A humble proposition to the newspapers I see involved in the formidable task of self-criticism: I'd like to be able to convince them that David Brock deserves treatment at least as severe as that meted out to Jayson Blair, Stephen Glass, and Mike Barnicle (the falsifiers from, respectively, *The New York Times*, *The New Republic*, and *The Boston Globe*).

Of course, these publications aren't the only ones at fault in the degradation of public life. We should not leave it to them, in place of politicians, to perform a postmortem on the corpse of calumnies; and certainly we should not leave it to them to try to rehabilitate the public arena, without which a democracy wastes away.

But still ...

Imagine the leading media reaching a decision on some kind of minimal ethical charter. Imagine them agreeing on the absolute necessity of respecting the private lives of political leaders. Imagine them proclaiming the inalienable character of this new human right: not, as Baudelaire proposed, the right to contradict yourself and the right to leave, but the right to privacy.

Envision a solemn declaration by which the papers, radios, and networks would enjoin one another from ever acting as the echo (whatever the form of this echo, whether underhand, or mock-hypothetical, or warning-like, or seemingly disinterested) of any ad hominem attack that hasn't passed the test of those famous fact-checking techniques at which they're self-professed experts.

Picture a journalist who has publicly confessed that he made up information with the sole aim of hitting a president "between the eyes," or launched, without verification, the appalling accusation against a presidential candidate of having invented, exaggerated, or simulated his war wounds. Imagine this journalist, this rabble-rouser, being banned from his profession with the same vigor as a plagiarist or a fabricator of interviews in this country.

A different paradigm might be created. Junk politics in its entirety might turn out to be less profitable. And for American democracy it would be the most resounding way of reviving the legacy of Thoreau, Emerson, and, of course, Tocqueville.

WHEN SECURITY BREEDS MADNESS

This is a personal anecdote, but one that says so much about the security-related neurosis that reigns in this country that I can't resist the temptation to record it here.

I get a phone call informing me that my daughter has just given birth. Naturally, I decide to travel back to Paris to see mother and child.

The problem is that with a final meeting in Washington that same night, and a dinner the next day in Baltimore that's difficult to cancel, I see I have exactly enough time to make the round trip in its literal sense: takeoff from Dulles Airport on the last plane, at 11:00 P.M.; landing at Charles de Gaulle at noon the next day; a motorcycle that will take me to the clinic, wait for me, and return me just in time, two hours later (having so to speak fit myself into the regulation period for cleaning, inspecting, and refueling the aircraft), to take the same plane back and be in Washington for dinner.

It's tight, but doable. Somewhat ridiculous, but important all the same.

So here I am on that night, at the appointed hour, in

the middle of a long line of passengers waiting to check in for the flight to Paris.

In front of me a couple of young people are arguing in low voices about the nature of their affair: Are they “dating” or are they in a relationship? If they are just dating, how serious is it? And isn’t the fact that the boy didn’t invite the girl to Thanksgiving dinner at his parents’ house an obvious obstacle to its being a full-fledged relationship? It’s simply a mystery to me, since this most American notion of “dating” has no equivalent in French ... This very un-French way of turning the date itself, and later the relationship as such, into a separate entity, living its own life alongside the two lovers ... The oddity, too, of the mania these lovers have for verbalizing, evaluating, codifying, and, when it comes down to it, ritualizing anything that might happen within the framework of their relationship ... For the sake of a series of social gestures, which suddenly become nothing but gestures, that sense of the unexpected, the romantic, is lost, which in Europe even the most trifling love affairs preserve ... I observe all this with infinite curiosity.



In front of me a couple of young people are arguing in low voices about the nature of their affair: Are they “dating” or are they in a relationship? If they are just dating, how serious is it? It’s a mystery to me, since this American notion of “dating” has no equivalent in French.

Behind me, a woman who read my first articles in *The Atlantic* starts asking me questions—gently, though, with that extreme politeness that always makes me wonder whether this tone is feigned or sincere, and which in any case is the exact opposite of the outright screaming match I’d have been treated to under similar circumstances in Paris. A reader, smiling, benevolent, who reproaches me for the attitude I adopted in my analysis of the megachurch phenomenon, especially in Willow Creek: Why do I mock these new churches? Why not pay attention to the good they might bestow on the men and women of today? What about the community ties they establish? The generosity they exhibit? The fact that Bono, for instance, appealed to them when he launched his campaign for awareness of AIDS in Africa?

So it’s one of those interminable lines, typical everywhere since September 11, which form whenever there’s a counter open somewhere. Once again, I find it hard to justify the usual clichés about the impatience, feverishness, agitation, even brutality, of American crowds. Quite the contrary—there’s calm, discipline, a mixture of docility and curiosity, gregarious submission and civilization. The oppo-

site of the French type of whining, line-cutting crowd; the opposite of the vicious, stamping herd, in which individuals are determined to tear one another to pieces. Here, when your gaze meets someone else’s, when people bump into each other, there’s a flurry of “It’s okay,” “You’re welcome,” “Enjoy your trip”—friendly commonplaces, outward signs of warmth, especially smiles, yes, those smiles that mean nothing, those affectless, emotionless smiles, smiles that seem to be there only to signify the pure will to smile and, by so doing, defuse any conflict that threatens. All that, once again, so quintessentially American ...

And then, when my turn finally comes, the most comical of scenarios, because it’s the only one I would never have thought of: having discovered that this passenger Lévy is traveling to Paris to spend a total of two hours there—that the flight approval requested includes another flight on the same day, going in the opposite direction—the company computer panics, blocks the request, and refuses to issue my ticket.

Red alert. Sudden commotion.

The distress of functionaries, first from the airline

company, then from airport security, faced with this unheard-of situation.

What’s all this about wanting to spend the day on a plane? What can you be up to, as you are proposing to spend seven hours flying one way and then seven hours flying back, with just a few minutes on French soil in between?

Grandfather? Prove it ...

Writer? No proof ...

I remember—since it gives me hope for a quick resolution—the story of my good Tocquevillian cop back at the start of my journey, on the highway.

Tocqueville? That has nothing to do with such a strange situation ...

I remember—somewhat more alarming—the story about Cat Stevens’s being sent back to England and, especially, the one about Ted Kennedy, who was prevented five times from getting into an airplane because they had confused his with another name on the “no-fly” list.

I can understand American paranoia. I can understand how a nation at war with enemies skilled at making themselves undetectable must equip itself with sophisticated warning and identification systems. But at the risk of the absurd?

DAVE BARTUFF/CORBIS

At the price of interrogations in which you are constrained to disclose details that have to do only with your private life?

Does every passenger need to become a suspect? Every trip an irksome undertaking? With body searches and frisking? And—something I will definitely never get used to—this way of making you stand shoeless, arms outstretched ... Isn't there a way to avoid these scenarios?

In this case everything turned out all right, and I was finally able to board my plane and spend my two hours in Paris. But one fact is obvious, and the country's authorities will need to realize it sooner or later. Here is the sign of real disorder: These new surveillance systems pose as many problems as they pretend to solve. And the brand-new Department of Homeland Security is still a long way from the "smart borders" that have been promised to America and the world.

THE JOURNEY TO AMERICA

In Baltimore, in the poorest neighborhood of the city, in its landscape of empty lots and half-razed buildings, I wanted to see the red-brick house that's one of the few to have been restored, where a plaque tells us—that an irony—that here Edgar Allan Poe lived for several years and that in this city he died.

I wanted to visit Johns Hopkins University (Hopkins: the maiden name of Elizabeth, Poe's mother—is that merely chance?), where my teacher Jacques Derrida lectured, and where Sartre scholars have gathered for a conference, the caliber of which is almost unimaginable in a European university.

But I also wanted to see the waterfront, where, one fine morning in 1791, at the height of the French Revolution, a great writer dropped anchor: François-René de Chateaubriand, who had set sail from Saint-Malo, and who, having passed by the Azores and then Saint-Pierre, invented the literary voyage to America, forty years before Tocqueville (to whom he was, incidentally, distantly related).

It's quite strange, this business of a voyage to America. Strange, when you think about it, this passion writers have had, not just French ones but other Europeans, too, for this particular journey.

Writers have always traveled, of course. Notwithstanding the famous—too famous, perhaps—saying of Lévi-Strauss at the start of his *Tristes Tropiques* ("I hate traveling"), Europeans have never ceased to love travels and travelers. But I'm not sure there's any destination in the world that—from the author of *Génie du Christianisme* to that of *Oliver Twist*, from Céline to Georges Duhamel, from Franz Kafka to Mario Soldati, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and so many others, for better or worse, whether eliciting hatred or reluctant adoration—more continually, intensely, irresistibly summoned them than America has. And although I can see what they were after when they journeyed to the East (the *Exote* so dear to Segalen, but also to Claudel and Malraux), to Rome or

Florence (the beauty of lines, the metamorphoses of art and its forms), to Jerusalem, Persepolis, Lhasa (mirage of origins and sources, cradle of civilizations), it's harder for me to grasp what it is that continues to beat in the heart of this desire to see America, and that can't be reduced to any of those great canonic motives.

A search for sources? Nonsense, since here we have a new world whose sources are in Europe.

Beauty? Harmony? With a few notable exceptions—a handful of free spirits who were able to discern the beauty of skyscrapers and of the new urban landscapes of these great, mad, artificial cities—most of these observers deplored the poverty, the ignorance, the unsightliness of Americans.

The exotic? The cool gaze of the ethnologist, alert to the customs of a foreign civilization? Those aren't viable reasons either. They bear no relevance to the European underpinnings of America, and also contradict this delight in the modern that, after three centuries, continues to haunt, shape, and pull along the nation of Jefferson and Kennedy, and which is still the best antidote to whatever love of folklore or the picturesque the typical fascination with the exotic may be laden with.

No. The journey to America doesn't fall into any of these categories. It obeys none of these traditional motives. And I even wonder if, point by point, methodically, it doesn't take just the opposite course.

First contradiction: not the exotic but the nearby; not the other but the same. Of course, in a sense, it is the other, America is other—but so much less "other" than the Asian, African, or Amerindian other! An other that talks to us about ourselves; an other that teaches us about our most ordinary, common, and, at bottom, shared reality; an other that always, or almost always, has the puzzling familiarity (or, which comes down to the same thing, the unsettling strangeness) of a caricature or a mirror image, a way of changing places whereby you travel a very long route to meet not the other but yourself, once again and afresh. Observe how among the moderns the journey to America always has the structure of a phenomenological odyssey.

Second contradiction: the future. Usually this kind of mirror reflects the past; it says to us, "This is what you used to be, where you came from, who made you." Here it's just the opposite: a mirror that, to use a well-known title, lends us the image not of our past history but of scenes of future life as American anticipation allows us to imagine them. "This is what you will be," it tells us; "this is where you're going and what kind of world you'll give birth to." If the journey to America is, like all journeys, a journey in time as much as in space, the time is not that of our dreamt, nostalgic, or reinvented memory but of a future that, according to your taste, according to each person's temperament, threatens us or is promised to us—a machine not to descend but to mount the chutes of time.

And then, one last contradiction—a third trail that com-

plicates the preceding one, and makes it more specific: America is skyscrapers, but it is also wide-open spaces and deserts; it is scenes of future life but also (I've seen enough of them, written and talked about them enough!) landscapes of the dawn of the world that are certainly not (see the preceding point) "our" European dawn but that, from Audubon to Baudrillard (along with all those movie westerns), are a kind of reminiscence of it, or a reminder. So there it is; perhaps this journey has the peculiarity, finally, of giving us a taste of both. Perhaps it's one of those very rare experiences capable of offering, in one single bundle of sensations, a whiff of the ultra-modern and another of the extremely archaic. And perhaps the love we feel for the journey stems from the obscure conviction that here, and here alone, the possibility is offered to a human being to see concentrated the materialization of these two dreams, pre- and post-historical, both equally powerful, but which usually we can think of only as separated by thousands of kilometers and, even more, by millennia. The American journey, in one single space (a country), in one short period of time (scarcely three centuries, maybe four), in the scarcely one hundred years, for instance, that sufficed for the first American pioneers who entered the territory of Death Valley and the Grand Canyon to invent the hideous Las Vegas (and, by doing so, to leap from the pre-biblical to the postmodern): the American journey, then, or the endless passage from Eden to Gehenna, the permanent short-circuit of the Bible and science fiction, the journey across humanity's golden age and age of lead ...

A BLINDNESS ON TOCQUEVILLE'S PART?

Philadelphia. Eastern State Penitentiary. Probably my last prison, but one of the most important ones, along with the one in Auburn, New York, that Tocqueville and his companion, Beaumont, studied. Everything is the same as it was, Sean Kelly tells me. He is the program director of the office that, since the establishment closed, more than thirty years ago, has been in charge of maintaining it, arranging tours, and every year, for Halloween, opening the site to groups of children short on ghosts and vivid emotions. Everything is exactly as our two missionaries found it on that day in October of 1831, when they were welcomed by James J. Barclay, George Washington Smith, and Roberts Vaux, leaders of the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of the Public Prisons, an association of Quakers, human-rights advocates, defenders of the Cherokee Indians, and early opponents of slavery, who conceived, created, and, from 1829, managed this new kind of penitentiary, which was not meant to punish the criminal or repair the damage caused to society by crime, or even, like Alcatraz, Angola, and, later on, Rikers Island, put the criminal in quarantine, get rid of him like trash and banish him. Instead it was to help him, through silence and solitude, to redeem himself, repent, and, in the pure Quaker tradition, elevate his soul, which had

been led astray by the devil. The same high walls. The same crenellated towers flanked by fake machicolations. The same moats, drawbridges, dungeons, arrow slits. The same Piranesi architecture, which the prisoner, arriving hooded, couldn't possibly see, but the mere idea of which—whatever was told him—was enough, Tocqueville said, to inspire in him the beginning of a religious terror and of a horror for his crime. And finally, inside this desolate setting, flooded by rain at night, resembling a haunted castle more than anything, the same prison complex, made up of a central tower from which seven galleries of individual cells radiate in perfect geometry, each one with a tiny garden, all of which lie open to the view of the guards. Had Tocqueville read Jeremy Bentham's opus, published forty years earlier, at the height of the prison debates initiated by Beccaria and the French revolutionaries? Did he realize, when he marveled at this system, in which, as he wrote, they "translated the intelligence of discipline into stone," that he was in the first detention center in the world that applied the famous "panopticon" schema that the nineteenth century would use not just for prisons, but as the principle of organization for its schools, hospitals, barracks, and factories? As far as I know, Tocqueville never cited either the book or its author. But it is certain that he perceived this system's stroke of genius. He understood that because it gives guards the ability to see without being seen; because it establishes a surveillance that is at once uninterrupted, invisible, and virtual; because no prisoner ever knows, in other words, whether the eye of power is at any given instant actually directed at him, it has the ability to throw souls into "a deeper terror than chains and blows." And above all, he appreciated this other peculiarity of the system, which is directly linked to the ideology of its Quaker promoters: in order to be absolutely certain of making the prisoners face their villainy; urging them to genuine repentance, which was the goal of their imprisonment; and hastening the intellectual and moral reform for which prison, according to the Quakers, should be the opportunity and the setting, they organized everything so as to isolate prisoners both day and night, and cut off any kind of contact—not just with their fellow prisoners but with the outer world and even the guards. Visits were forbidden; the slightest attempt at speech was punished; any reading other than the holy Scriptures was prohibited. Thus were they put in the situation of caring only about God ...

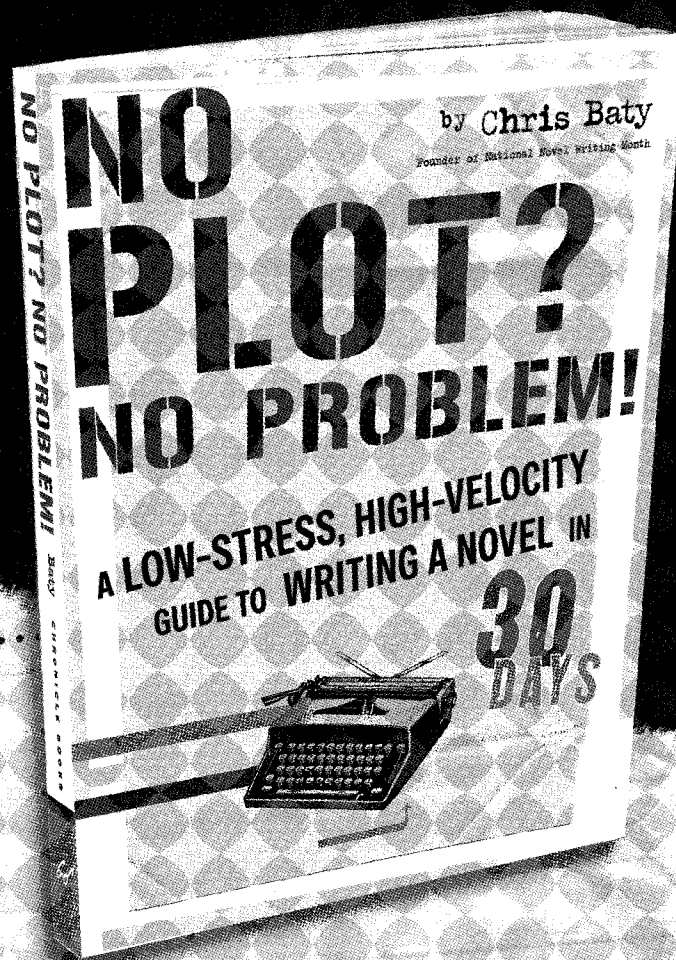
Ten years later, Dickens would proclaim his horror at an organization that was meant to convert delinquents to good but which, as far as he could see, managed only to push them over the line into madness. Learning that everything, from meals to religious services and bimonthly showers, was arranged so that no one ever met anyone else, he would denounce "this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain," which is "immeasurably worse than any torture of the body." Others, many other visitors, throughout the entire nineteenth century, would denounce the insanity of a world in which the phobia of noise was so

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severe that the wheels of the carts that stopped at the cell doors at mealtimes were wrapped in leather; in which the last trick left to prisoners to hold on to the sound of human presence was to tap gently on iron sewage pipes to send one another secret messages; and in which, when a rebel couldn't cure himself of talking, they put into his mouth a piece of cast iron attached to a mechanism that buried it a little deeper in his throat whenever he moved his tongue or glottis, and, on one occasion, that suffocated a prisoner.

But not Tocqueville. He had no fundamental objection to this Quaker vision of redemption by meditation, prayer, and labor. He visited these little rooms whose only opening was a bull's-eye window carved out of the ceiling, looking onto the sky. He visited the prisoners and, despite the rules of silence, obtained permission to question them and extract vague confidences about their detention. And he found almost no faults with the system. He seemed scarcely moved by the notion that speech was the supposed vector of all contagions and, necessarily, of the vilest of evil spells. Beaumont even talked of these cells as a "palace" that must have cost an "astronomical amount," and which, at a time when the president of the United States had to content himself with a coal burner and pitchers of water, was equipped with central heating and running water. In short, compared with Auburn, where prisoners were isolated only at night and devoted themselves during the day to forced collective labor, and finding that here hygiene, food, and the material conditions of life were objectively better, observing that the jails smelled good and were clean, and also noting that corporal punishment had for the time disappeared, the two friends found enough merit in this model to commend it to their own government. Was that a shortcoming of Tocqueville's, or of his context? Was it the blindness of the time, or—perhaps—a faint shadow on the portrayal, so constantly flattering, that a parallel reading of his masterpiece and the great open book of the living America of today invites us to admire?

PORTRAIT OF THE FILMMAKER AS A MUSICIAN

Don't tell Woody Allen he's a filmmaker; he thinks of himself as a musician. That must be what went through the minds of the hundred or so fans who saw him perform tonight in the café at the Carlyle Hotel, on the corner of Madison and Seventy-sixth, where he came, as he does every Monday, accompanied by his New Orleans Jazz Band, to play the clarinet. Here was one of the greatest living American filmmakers. Here was the admirable auteur of *Annie Hall* and *The Purple Rose of Cairo*. And here he was within arm's reach, sitting on a stool, without any special set, among diners who didn't think it necessary to stop their drinking and eating to listen to him. Here he was, dressed in corduroy trousers and a light-blue shirt; concentrating, eyes half closed or fully shut; defined gestures; confident breath; fingers flat on the open holes of his clarinet; the muscles of his mouth tight, yet not puffing out his cheeks

around the mouthpiece; his upper lip surprisingly mobile, at times seeming to inhale and swallow the top of the reed and at times curling back as if to convey its decision to keep its distance, disavow that nasty instrument, and, all of a sudden, with sovereign authority, literally cut off its breath ...

In the beginning you say to yourself, That can't be him. You tell yourself that the real Woody Allen wouldn't expose himself this way, in this bar; that this famous little man, the schlemiel with the physique of the eternal loser, heir to Keaton, Chaplin, and Harold Lloyd, epitome of the awkward oaf who has never been seen to take a step, come through the door, pick up any utensil, let alone a musical instrument, without tripping up and getting his feet caught in the rug—he can't be this virtuoso, his technique so flawless, with such an impeccable presence and, when he stops playing and starts singing, such a perfect, well-calibrated voice. And then, after a while, you get used to it. Little by little you recognize him. When he isn't playing—when he gives the floor to Cynthia Sayer, his pianist, or Rob Garcia, his drummer, or Eddy Davis, the fat man with the plaid shirt opening onto a buffalo neck, who accompanies him on the banjo; when he starts nodding his head to the rhythm of the trombone or staring at the tips of his shoes with the look of a punished child, waiting for someone to finish a solo—you rediscover the sad gargoyle face, the furrowed mask, the long nose, and the dazed, "nutty professor" side of the actor in *Take the Money and Run*.

And then, once more the virtuoso gains the upper hand. And the musician launches into a wild rendition of a Glenn Miller or Benny Goodman tune. Now he's stopped being the director of *Manhattan Murder Mystery* and becomes the disciple of Gene "Honey Bear" Sedric—the one you had to look for, that night thirty years ago, when *Annie Hall* won four Oscars, at Michael's Pub, where he was performing in front of an audience pretty much like tonight's. Here he is no longer the world superstar who starts a riot in Paris just by stepping out of his hotel, but only little Allen Stewart Konigsberg, who chose his pseudonym in homage to Woody Herman, who called his last daughter Bechet in homage to the great Sidney, and who has said a hundred times over that the two most desirable destinies in this world have always seemed, in his eyes, to be those of a basketball player (which he had to give up rather quickly) and a clarinetist (to which he continues, here at the Carlyle, to sacrifice some of his desire, his time, and his fame). Oh, the intense joy on his face, this countenance of an old, consumptive adolescent metamorphosed into a semi-athlete, his air of absolute triumph, when he reaches the end of one of those solos and you don't know if that amazing breath comes from his mouth, his body movements, the force of his soul, or all three at once.

The history of art is full of these misunderstandings, of misunderstanding, in which you see a great artist living or acting as though he were convinced he had chosen the wrong genre. We know the case of Stendhal, thinking he would owe his immortality to his plays. And that of Cha-

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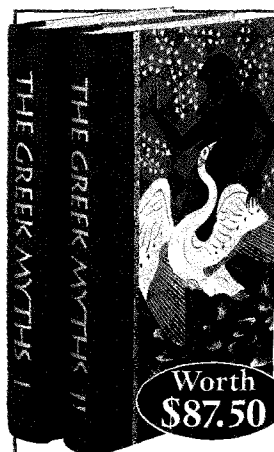
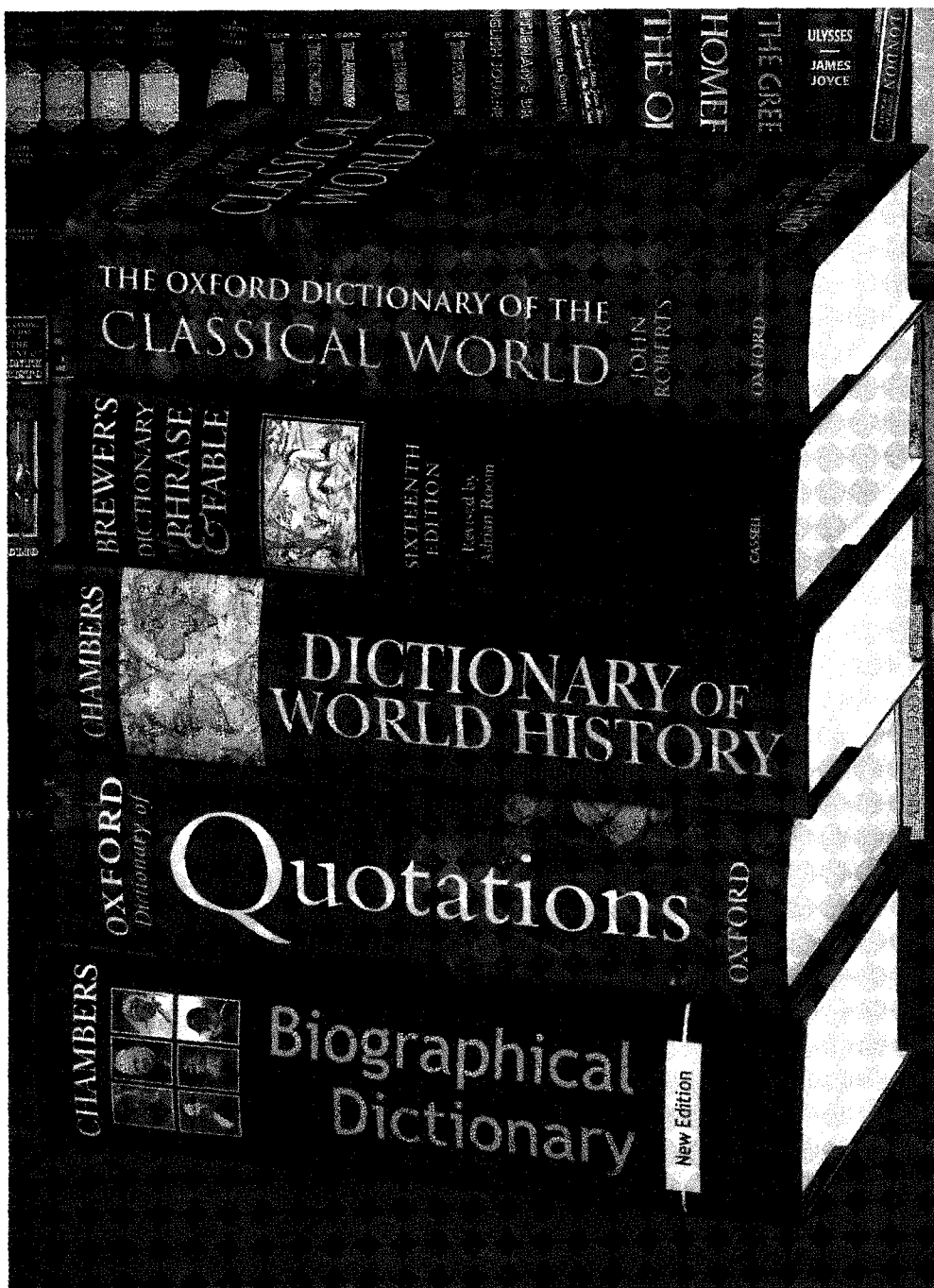
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teaubriand, persuaded that his masterpiece was not *Les Mémoires d'Outre tombe* but *Les Natchez*. I myself have seen Paul Bowles explaining, with his last breath, that his great works, the ones that would stand the test of time and that had to be taken care of after his death, were not *The Sheltering Sky* and *Let It Come Down* but the delightful musical pieces he composed every spring for the end-of-the-year celebration at the American School of Tangiers and its director, Joe McPhilips. But this case, the case of this great filmmaker coming every Monday to perform: this case of the formal innovator you feel would give up the most beautiful shot in *Purple Rose* for a well-played bar of music, able to switch successfully from the sound of a bugle to that of a reed flute—this case surpasses anything I know.

I will get to see the other Allen. The next day, in his office, on Park Avenue, I'll get to see the filmmaker and the intellectual, a New Yorker through and through, who will have many things to say, not just about his films but about the mediocrity of Kerry, the nullity of Bush, the state of political collapse of the country, the neo-puritanism that's winning over the middle classes. Of which, I ask him all of a sudden, wasn't his affair with his daughter ("She's not my daughter," he jumps in), just as much as the Lewinsky affair, the harbinger? And about his conviction (the height of pride, when I think about it) that a guy like him, Allen, doesn't have the right—do you understand? *the right*—to get involved in politics, since he's so unpopular, since he so perfectly embodies all that this Puritan, suicidal America execrates, and since he is at the same time so incredibly famous that each word that might come out of his mouth would be held not *for* but *against* his champion, and would thus only weaken him and contribute to his defeat ...

But the great moment, the real Woody, the hour of emotion and truth, the one that in any case most impresses me, since I feel that here we are in contact with his most intimate identity, is his euphoric, squandered jazz performance.

THREE TYCOONS

It's his hardness that strikes you first. His air of icy, cautious ferocity. His wolf eyes, unusually far apart, very green, piercing, but which don't really go to the trouble of studying you. His way of making no excuses for himself, never explaining himself. His insistence in declaring, as I distill it, I am Henry Kravis, master of the world; I am the head of Kohlberg Kravis Roberts and Co., the best private equities business there is; I am the son of Ray Kravis, a small-time oilman from Oklahoma, and I have built this enormous business, this empire, where the very practice of forced takeovers has become an industry in itself. People are mad at me? I know. They see me as a predator, a lackey for Bush, an asshole? I couldn't care less! I won't bother to tell you the history of the New York City Investment Fund that we founded with a few friends seven years ago. I won't lower myself to telling you about the tens of thousands of jobs we

create with our money in the neighborhoods the state has abandoned; or about its moral code and our own; or about its principles and mine, which are those of big business—and I never for an instant doubted how good they are, not just for me but for America and the world ...

After a while, though, something else shows through. A crack in the mask. A fissure. Maybe an old clumsiness. Maybe fear, too. Yes, I'd swear it, Henry Kravis is afraid. Of what? Of whom? Of other people, his fellow men, and of the war of everyone against everyone else that reigns in the jungle of big American capital? Of his own ruthlessness, which he knows only too well? Does he, like Gatsby, live in the obsessive fear of seeing his original sins come back to the surface and inscribe themselves on this face of his, which he has gone to such pains, over so many years, to make as smooth as the varnished mahogany paneling in the library where he receives me? All of that, undoubtedly. And then this picture, over our heads, which I hadn't really noticed at first, this hyper-realist painting, probably done from a photograph, which represents a charming adolescent in a blazer and a white shirt open over a hairless chest—college boy, little prince—his son, who died at the age of nineteen, and about whom he is disconsolate.

Henry Kravis, then, can talk for two hours without saying much about his New York philanthropies. Barry Diller, though, does better. He asked Frank Gehry, the architect of the Guggenheim museums, to plan the future headquarters of his empire in Chelsea. For this Gehry conceived of a building constructed almost entirely of glass, with a façade that shows no hint of steel or concrete framework underneath: a great ship of crystal, an intelligible mirage, that will float over the Hudson. In other words, Diller is putting his mark on the city. He is imprinting his signature on it. He is legitimately joining the illustrious lineage of Stuyvesants, Rockefellers, Reynoldses, Singers, Woolworths. But Diller spends a large part of our meeting trying to convince me that, considering the absurd rent he pays here, in these old offices; considering the prices of downtown real estate and its potential for appreciation; considering the impact the building will have, the publicity it will generate, and the energy its sheer possibility is already radiating to his staff, this pharaonic project, this pure gift, this masterpiece, will not only cost his company nothing, it will in fact bring in a substantial profit. Arrogance again, or a supreme form of humility? Is this the honesty of a man who refuses to play the conventional (and excruciatingly European!) game of the ashamed billionaire who expiates his success and strives to appear acceptable—or is it the height of self-punishment and modesty? I observe Barry Diller, with his powerful, vulnerable skull that conveys the air of a Picasso, with his smile that's habitually so melancholic but which, now that I've stopped pestering him about his memories of Paramount, his tussles with Murdoch, his conversion to tele-shopping, has become curiously childlike. I listen to him talk passionately about the architectural model, placed between

our chairs, of what may be the great work of his life, but for which he begs me to give him no credit, none at all. There is a kind of madness, too, in this man. A mixture of gratuitous talent, potlatch, glorious eccentricity, and, when he explains to me that he couldn't care less about posterity and only his own people count—that is to say, his close friends; his wife, Diane von Furstenberg; his younger, heroin-addict brother, who died alone at the age of thirty-six, shot in a fleabag motel—there is suddenly a brash insolence, a mutely enraged violence, an amorality, that's too flaunted to be completely sincere and not betray some kind of hidden wound.

And then Soros. The implacable George Soros, the impatient speculator, the virtuoso of hedge funds, the remorseless trader who, when he was playing the currencies market more than a decade ago, almost brought down the pound sterling and, beyond that, the international monetary system. He doesn't regret anything either. He doesn't criticize the operating procedure of the American tycoon, or the notion according to which money is born noble and, everywhere, finds itself in chains. With one exception, though—which makes his case an interesting variation. His style. His looks. His tousled aspect, which reminds you of Elias Canetti. The slight sloppiness of his clothing, which lends him a professorial guise.

His accent—this Hungarian accent that, in him, seems like the sign of a resistance to American-ness. And then this way he has, during the lunch we're having in a rather modest dining room adjacent to his office, of talking only about prisons, about the new fascism that is looming, about public-spirited investments, democracy, open society, Karl Popper—this way of quoting his own Popperlike books

as though everyone had read them, and his childish disappointment when he understands that I'm here not so much for Sunday philosophy as for the flamboyant, paradoxical billionaire himself. On the one hand, this supertycoon who, when I ask him whether he is sometimes burdened with a guilty conscience, because of these fortunes that are so curiously won, isn't far from replying that attacking a whole currency, throwing banks into a panic, forcing them to react and invent, is not a crime but a service, a revolutionary gesture, a duty. On the other hand, his nostalgia for European values and concerns, which in his mind doesn't seem the least bit contradictory—a nostalgia that leads him to take back to Europe (especially Eastern Europe) the money earned in America, while importing to America (especially Democratic America) whatever European memories remain enclosed within himself. For his problem is Europe. He is in mourning, not for a son or a brother but for Europe. And if there is but one thing for which he is inconsolable, it's being merely George Soros and not one of those Czech or Viennese philosophers he's

admired since his youth; a part of him dreams of being their secret successor. Human, too human. Another embodiment of a system that is regarded by half the planet as inhuman, and this touching, pathetic share of humanity. Is he the most peculiar of the three? The most romantic? Or the wackiest?

BACK TO SQUARE ONE (OR NEARLY)

Boston. One year later—or almost. And in this loop that's closing, in this mixed impression of endgame and beginning, the curious feeling of finding myself in a city I scarcely know but where I already have memories.

I return to the Union Oyster House, where *The Atlantic* hosted its breakfasts during the Democratic convention. I walk back to Copley Square, where on election night the population of Democrats waited so many hours, in vain, for their conquered champion to appear. I wander through the now empty hallways of the Fairmont, where the announcers officiated. I linger in the reading rooms of the Boston Public Library, which I visited briefly one morning between meetings with aides to Obama and Kerry. I didn't realize at that time how beautiful the city is. In the whirlwind of the instant, I didn't take enough note of its affluent, literate charm, aristocratic and European, which so impressed

There is something about Boston's cheerful Puritanism, its proud, provincial slowness. There is, in its slow dawns and its nights slow to end, in its reverberations of the past century—there is in all of this the source of a faint ennui but also an irresistible charm.

Tocqueville that he stayed here for three weeks, the longest stopover in his journey. Boston was the only American city to have so lastingly bewitched him ...

Hence I take my time on this occasion. I look for the place on Washington Street where the Marlboro Hotel stood, where Tocqueville went as soon as he arrived. I have dinner at the Parker House, through which the ghosts of Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Longfellow hover, as well as Tocqueville's own, of course. I even let myself be led on an informal tour organized by a friend, which, while not the official tour of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, guides me through the city from one site of social activism to another: the house of Roger Williams, apostle of free thought and of the nascent separation of church and state; the first church in New England where the emancipation of slaves was preached; the bronze relief of Robert Gould Shaw, colonel of the first regiment in the state made up exclusively of black soldiers; the street where, at the height of his combat for racial equality and women's rights, a crowd almost lynched William Lloyd

Garrison; the hotel where John F. Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Senate; and even—a final avatar of this process of transforming everything into memory and museums that has continued to manifest itself until the very last day!—the house of the Kerrys, on Beacon Hill ...

I like this city. There is something about its cheerful Puritanism; its proud, provincial slowness; its hundred-year-old arbor vitae trees; its houses that exude the rich perfume of polished wood, its period parquet floors, portraits of ancestors on the walls, fashionable, well-used furniture. There is, in its slow dawns and its nights slow to end, in the sight of its narrow streets and their too orderly cobblestones, in its reverberations of the past century—there is in all of this the source of a faint ennui but also an irresistible charm that places it, without contest, in that little cluster of cities (Seattle, New Orleans, Savannah ...) where I, too, could spend three weeks or more.

With, perhaps, two reservations.

For there were two painful moments during these pleasant days.

The southern sections of the city—Dorchester, Mattapan, Roxbury—are also the poorest neighborhoods, where you suddenly have the sense you're on the threshold of another world. A world of brutality and narcotics. A world of abandoned buildings, squatted in by gangs, their walls covered with immense, multicolored, naive murals. The world of that young, homeless Haitian woman who thought the hospital was for other people and who, ten minutes before I arrived, gave birth here, on the floor of a supermarket, with the help of a cop who was passing by, a feat for which he will be decorated by his unit. The world, a little further on, of Adèle—a very old woman, spitting image of Priscilla Ford, the woman on death row in the Las Vegas prison—who lives in the slums on Blue Hill Avenue, and who is being taken to the emergency room by ambulance ... But actually, no—she's not that old. When I talk with one of the neighbors huddled around the ambulance, I discover that she's only forty-five, and that she's just very poor, out of work for ten years, exhausted. "Be careful," the neighbor shouts to one of the stretcher bearers, as she pats her friend's sparse hair; "be careful, she's on cortisone and stress medication." And Adèle, her lips white, sweat on her temples, eyes glazed, already gone: "Is it the good Lord that's taking me away?"

And difficult too, disappointing, although for reasons of an entirely different nature, my meeting with the ultra-Bostonian Samuel Huntington. I knew there was a problem with his last book. Like a number of his readers, I had been troubled by his thesis about Spanish-speaking immigrants whose uncontrolled influx would transform the white Protestant nation of the first pioneers into a bicultural polity. But here, in this elegant restaurant on Beacon Hill, where the food is too good and the wine too heady, now, to my great surprise, he throws all caution to the wind and in a few sentences expresses what his opponents have long suspected

him of thinking without daring to admit it out loud. What startling violence wells up in his blue eyes when he says to me, "The big thing, the big problem with Hispanics, is that they don't like education!" The sudden explosion of hostility that disfigures the scholarly face of the professor when, anxious to tell me what, after all, annoys him so much in this rise to power of a hardworking, patriotic Mexican minority, he starts explaining that these people, because they'll have the advantage of bilingualism, will get "preferences for jobs," so they'll be able to "take their jobs away" from the "large majority" of other Americans, and that when these other Americans realize it all, when they understand that they, the whites—in principle the bearers of the old founding "creed" of the nation—will henceforth be the object of "discrimination," they will react with a terrible concoction of "resentment" and "nativistic" racism. And then Israel ... His strange anger when, at the end of the interview, I put forward the idea that Israel, along with France and America, is one of the rare countries founded on what he calls a "creed." Oh, no, he says. That's not a creed! Don't associate the fine word "creed" with a country based on "ethnicity and culture," where Arabs and Jews have distinct rights! I answer back. I protest. I argue that talking about "ethnicity" in relation to a people, Americans, whose very essence is to be made up of all peoples doesn't make much sense. And when it's almost time to leave, there's a shadow of doubt in his gaze, a sudden anxiety in his voice: "Did I say some things I shouldn't have?"

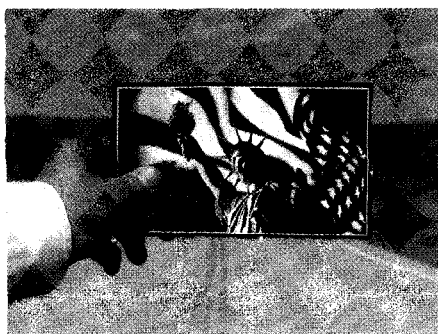
UNDER THE EYE OF ETERNITY

Cape Cod. Land's end. Or—but it's ultimately the same—birth, beginning, the very place where, four centuries ago, the 102 Pilgrims landed, with their dogs, from the *Mayflower*. And today, in Provincetown, three hours away by car from Boston, these dollhouses, these inexpensive art galleries, these fishing shacks with painted clapboard façades gnawed by salt and snow—this typically middle-class seaside resort whose other peculiarity is to have become, over time, a gay town. What on earth is Norman Mailer doing here? How could this boy from Brooklyn, this New Yorker in heart and mind, this supermale with six marriages, this man whom the feminist Kate Millett called the quintessence of the heterosexual, macho pig—how could this man have chosen to live in a small town of 3,500 souls, most of them homosexuals, whose contribution to local culture consists (if I am to believe the waiter in the faux fisherman's restaurant where I wait till it's time for our interview) of a festival of sexy bodies, a week for leather enthusiasts, and a colloquium on the problems posed by adoption by same-sex couples?

Of course I ask Mailer. It's even one of the first things I ask him when he appears in the sun-drenched living room of his house on Commercial Street, short, thickset, all neck and torso, very round in his sweater vest, full mane of white hair, blue eyes that scrutinize me and that have lost none of their irony. But he doesn't answer. Or, rather, he does, but

in a roundabout way. He is with the comely Norris, his wife, and they both reply that that's just how it is. Chance. She for her paintings, he for his novels, were both looking for a quiet setting where they could work at their own pace. So here they are. Cape Cod. And on Cape Cod, Provincetown. Don't look any further than that. There aren't any other specific reasons ... All right, then. I suppose it's possible, after all. Possible you should forget the *Mayflower* and the discovery of America. Possible not to ascribe too much meaning to that peculiar book *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, published in 1984 and set in Provincetown, the hero of which was gay. And possible, too, that Mailer is here simply because this beautiful, light-filled house in the dunes, facing the sea, was the ideal place to lay up a store of solitude and silence. What, he asks me in substance, is the main problem of writers in general, and of writers who know their time is short in particular? How to isolate themselves, seek exile in their own country. Sometimes, like Philip Roth, vanish in the confines of their own city or household? Leave the ranks not of murderers but of idiots, amnesiacs, noisemakers, culture-haters, all those who

toward the book he's writing now, gathered into the few years that are left to write it. So he is economical, calculating, and has an altogether different intelligence of time, another quality of presence, a kind of colossal now that, unlike the classic diseases of memory, crushes whatever has been experienced and trains its spotlight only on what is actually happening. But he doesn't regret anything. He is not sad, or worried. He is even the type, like Ravelstein in his amiable rival Bellow's book, who willingly tells his visitor that he "loves existence" and is "not in a hurry to die." And yet, he is counting. He keeps counting: The number of days that are left to him. The number of hours an interview steals away from him. The books he'll never read. His eyes, now so frail, need to be saved for writing his own books. The hours—maybe just the minutes—every day when he is truly master of his art. His hand, which needs to be in training for that very time. His breath, which he needs to hold in, so as not to waste it, so that he can keep on creating. He does not, like another of his old rivals, write to keep from dying; he keeps from dying so that he can finish writing. Not for posterity, that immortality of weak souls, but, like the character in Godard's



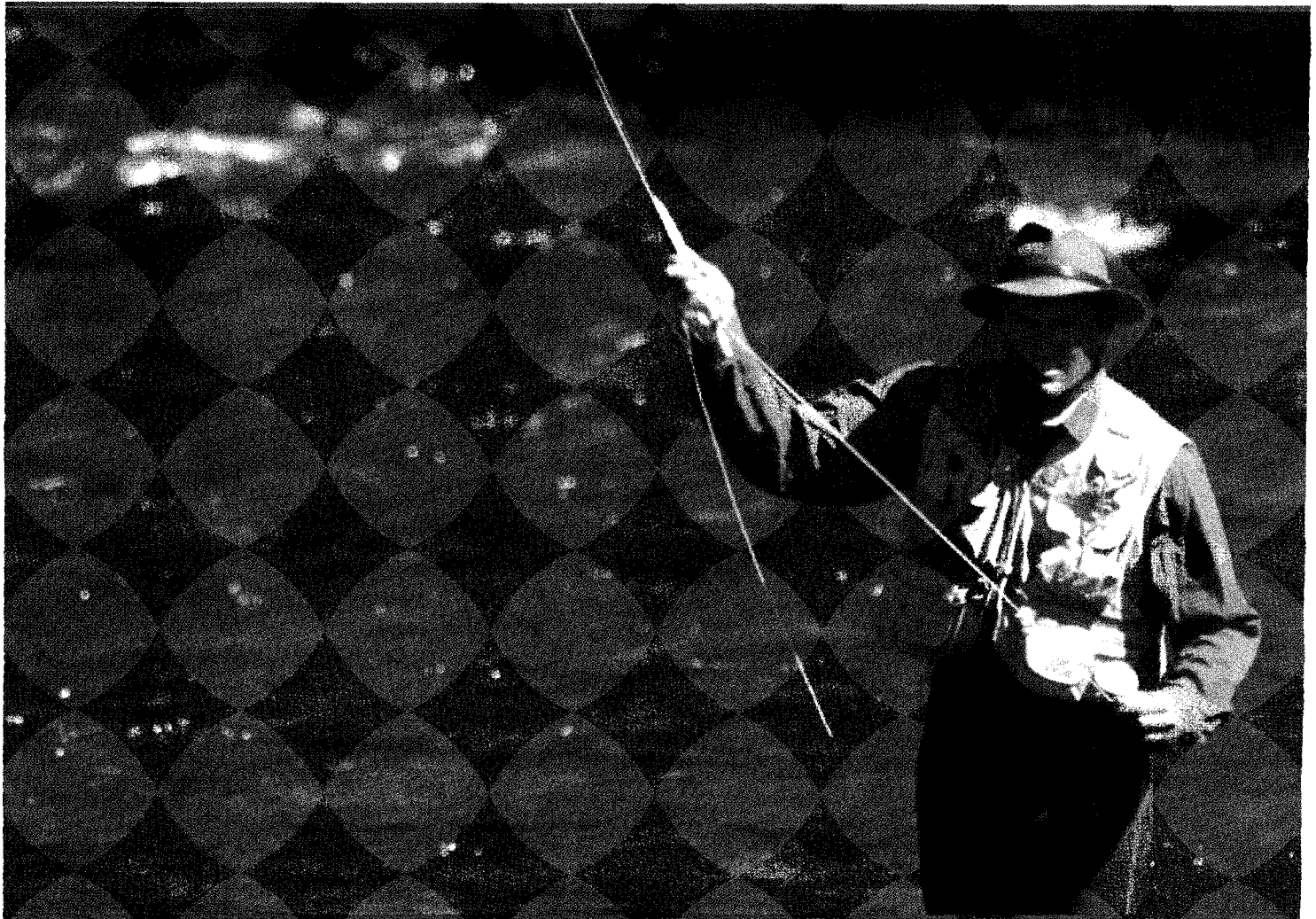
Perhaps the love we Europeans feel for the journey to America stems from the obscure conviction that here we can see the materialization of two dreams, pre- and post-historical, which usually we think of as separated by thousands of kilometers and, even more, by millennia.

seem to exist only to turn to ashes a writer's desire to write. And once you're finally set in this cocoon, in this sanctuary of rest, this chapel, then write books mercilessly, books the age wasn't expecting ...

Norman Mailer is eighty-two years old. In a certain way he doesn't look it. No, despite the alcohol, the drugs, the excesses of his successive lives; despite his encroaching deafness; despite his legs that have trouble supporting him and give him the deliberate walk of a little stone golem; despite his air of an old boxer who's just left the ring or an old sailor who's come ashore for good, he radiates an eerie, unsettling youthfulness. But the overwhelming impression he gives is of no longer being always or completely of this world. The only real visible mark of age on the face of this great living successor to Hemingway is the look of absence that appears when you try to talk to him not just about his books but about his exploits of long ago. The war in the Pacific? Vietnam? The Nixon and Kennedy years? His open letter to Castro? His candidacy for mayor of New York? The naked? The dead? The battles for civil rights, and the struggles in the culture war? The old sailor responds, of course. But once again, halfheartedly. Without fervor. Without eloquence. As though his energy were elsewhere, reaching out

masterpiece, *Breathless*, to be immortal, immortal right away, and then die. So sometimes, at nightfall, the ghosts of Gilmore, Marilyn, Oswald, Muhammad Ali, return, those icons of an America that seemed to exist only to end up in great books. Sometimes the door creaks open and the image rises up of an evening spent at the Kennedys', in Hyannisport, where he had paid a neighborly visit; of that cocktail party where he got into a fight with McGeorge Bundy, the ridiculous diplomatic adviser to his personal enemy, Lyndon Johnson; or, more recent, of a dinner with the elder Mrs. Bush, who listened to him, with gaping mouth, describe an article he had recently written about her president son's contract with the devil. But by and large all that has faded. His life, when I press him to recall it, is now nothing but a series of pale shadows, long spans of boredom, sterile provocations, misunderstandings. The most secular of American novelists, the inventor of New Journalism, the engaged writer par excellence, the man who covered the Republican and Democratic conventions and won two Pulitzer Prizes, ends up like Proust or Kafka, his eyes fixed on eternity. This world is no longer my own. My most recent dream is not for you. I am facing up, albeit in a different way. My most daring novel. Wait and see. Cape Cod. ▀

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THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS 2005

Does Meritocracy Work? *by Ross Douthat*
The Best Class Money Can Buy *by Matthew Quirk*
Is There Life After Rankings? *by Colin Diver*
What Does College Teach? *by Richard H. Hersh*
You Are Not Alone *by Sheelah Kolhatkar*



Photographs by Forrest MacCormack

Does Meritocracy Work?

Not if society and colleges keep failing to distinguish between wealth and merit

BY ROSS DOUTHAT

For a parent drowning in glossy college mailings, a college admissions officer deluged with applications, or a student padding a résumé with extracurricular activities, it's easy to see applying to college as a universal American rite of passage—a brutal and ecumenical process that ushers each generation of stressed-out applicants into the anteroom of adulthood. But for many American teenagers the admissions process is something else entirely—a game that is dramatically rigged against them, if they even play it. In a country where a college degree is a prerequisite for economic and social advancement, rich and upper-middle-class students can feel secure about their chances. They may not have the grades or the good fortune to attend their first-choice schools, but they're still likely to be admitted to a college that matches their interests and ambitions reasonably well. For those further down the socioeconomic ladder, though, getting in is hard, and getting through can be even harder.

Native intelligence and academic achievement do lift many poor students into college. But especially where elite colleges are concerned, students from well-off families have a big advantage. The figures are stark. If you hope to obtain a bachelor's degree by age twenty-four, your chances are roughly one in two if you come from a family with an annual income over \$90,000; roughly one in four if your family's income falls between \$61,000 and \$90,000; and slightly better than one in ten if it is between \$35,000 and \$61,000. For high schoolers whose families make less than \$35,000 a year the chances are around one in seventeen.

This is not how the modern meritocracy was supposed to work. American higher education was overhauled in the middle years of the twentieth century to be a force for near universal opportunity—or so the overhaulers intended. The widespread use of the SAT would identify working-class kids with high “scholastic aptitude,” as the initialism then had it (since 1994 the SAT has been for “scholastic assess-

ment”), and give them the academic chances they deserved. Need-based financial aid and government grants would ensure that everyone who wanted a college education could afford one. Affirmative action would diversify campuses and buoy disadvantaged minorities.

Part of this vision has come to pass. Minority participation in higher education has risen since the 1960s, and college campuses are far more racially and ethnically diverse

today than they were half a century ago. But the socioeconomic diversity that administrators assumed would follow has failed to materialize. It's true that more low-income students *enroll* in college now than in the 1970s—but they are less likely to graduate than their wealthier peers. Through boom and recession, war and peace, the proportion of the poorest Americans obtaining college degrees by age twenty-four has remained around six percent.

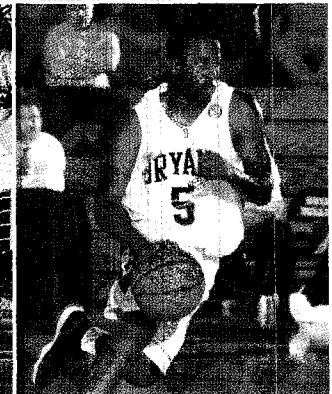
This is not something that most colleges like to discuss—particularly elite schools,

which have long taken pride in their supposed diversity. But the idea that the meritocracy isn't working is gaining currency among observers of higher education. It's visible in recent high-profile changes in the financial-aid policies of such schools as Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Virginia; as a thread of disquiet running through the interviews this magazine has conducted with admissions officers over the past two years; and as the unpleasant but undeniable conclusion of a number of new studies.

The most prominent of these studies was headed by William Bowen, a former president of Princeton, who since leaving that office, in 1988, has produced a series of weighty analyses of college admissions—on the consequences of racial preferences, the role of athletics, and, most recently, the question of socioeconomic diversity. In the recently published book *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education*, Bowen and his co-authors use detailed data from the 1995 entering class at nineteen selective schools—five



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Ivies, ten small liberal arts colleges, and four flagship state universities—to argue that elite universities today are as much “bastions of privilege” as they are “engines of opportunity.” Only six percent of the students at these schools are first-generation collegians; only 11 percent of the graduates come from families in the country’s bottom economic quartile. The picture is even worse in another recent study. The education expert Anthony Carnevale and the economist Stephen Rose surveyed 146 top colleges and found that only three percent of their students came from the bottom economic quartile of the U.S. population—whereas 74 percent came from the top one.

At the very least, the persistence of this higher-education gap suggests that the causes of the decades-old growth in economic inequality are deeper than, say, tax cuts or the ebb and flow of the stock market. Inequality of income breeds inequality of education, and the reverse is also true: as long as the financial returns on a college degree continue to rise, the upper and upper-middle classes are likely to pull further away from the working and lower classes.

Through boom and recession, war and peace, the proportion of the poorest quarter of Americans obtaining college degrees has remained constant, at around six percent.

The United States still leads most countries by a considerable margin in proportion of the population with a college degree (27 percent). But when the sample is narrowed to those between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four, we slip into the pack of industrialized nations, behind Canada, Japan, and five others. Further, the U.S. college-age population is swelling (it will increase by about 3.9 million during this decade, according to one estimate), with much of the growth occurring among low-income Hispanics, one of the groups least likely to attend college. Educating this population is an enormous challenge—one that we are unprepared to meet.

The obvious culprits are the universities, which have trumpeted their commitment to diversity and equal access while pursuing policies that favor better-off students. Not only is admitting too many low-income students expensive, but it can be bad for a school’s rankings and prestige—and in the long run prestige builds endowments.

The current arms race for higher rankings began in earnest in the early 1980s, when the post-Baby Boom dearth of applicants sent colleges, both public and private, scrambling to keep tuition revenue coming in. It has been

sustained by anxious Boomer parents, by the increasing financial advantages of a college degree, by cutbacks in government aid, and by magazines eager to make money from ranking America’s top schools. The rankings rely on statistics such as average SAT scores, alumni giving, financial resources, and graduation rates. Attracting students with high scores *and* high family incomes offers the biggest gains of all. (See Matthew Quirk’s “The Best Class Money Can Buy,” page 128.)

Meanwhile, the admissions process is strewn with practical obstacles for low-income students. Early-admissions programs, for instance, which James Fallows has discussed in these pages (see “The Early-Decision Racket,” September 2001 *Atlantic*), offer many benefits to applicants, but they almost exclusively help wealthy students, whose parents and guidance counselors are more likely to have the resources to take advantage of them. Poorer students are also less likely to know about the availability of financial aid, and thus more likely to let “sticker shock” keep them from applying in the first place. And a poor student put on a waiting list at a selective school is less likely than a well-to-do student to be accepted, because often a school has exhausted its financial-aid budget before it turns to the list.

In this scramble selectivity is “the coin of the realm,” as one admissions officer put it to *The Atlantic* last year. More and more schools define themselves as “selective” in an effort to boost their position and prestige, and fewer and fewer offer the kind of admissions process that provides real opportunities for poorer students. As a result, those disadvantaged students who do attend college are less and less likely to find themselves at four-year schools. Among students who receive Pell Grants—the chief need-based form of federal assistance—the share attending four-year colleges fell from 62 percent in 1974 to 45 percent in 2002; the share attending two-year schools rose from 38 percent to 55 percent.

The advantage to well-off students is particularly pronounced at private colleges and universities. Over the course of the 1990s, for instance, the average private-school grant to students from the top income quartile grew from \$1,920 to \$3,510, whereas the average grant to students from the lowest income quartile grew from \$2,890 to \$3,460. And for all the worry of the middle class over rising tuition, increases in grant dollars often outstrip increases in tuition costs for middle- and upper-income students—but not for their poorer peers. In the second half of the 1990s, a study by the Lumina Foundation (a higher-education nonprofit) found, families with incomes below \$40,000 received less than seventy cents in grants for every dollar increase in private-college tuition. All other families, including the richest, received more than a dollar in aid for every dollar increase in tuition.

It isn’t just schools that have moved their aid dollars

up the income ladder. State and federal governments have done the same. Since the 1980s public funds have covered a shrinking share of college costs, and with entitlements claiming an ever growing chunk of state and federal budgets, the chance of a return to the free-spending 1970s seems remote. But even when higher-education outlays have increased—they did during the 1990s boom years, for instance—government dollars have been funneled to programs that disproportionately benefit middle- and upper-income college students.

Both colleges and states have increasingly invested in “merit-based” scholarships, which offer extra cash to high-performing students regardless of need; these programs are often modeled on Georgia’s HOPE scholarship, established in 1993 and funded by a state lottery, and thus amount to a form of regressive taxation. The federal government, meanwhile, has used tax credits to help parents defray the cost of college—a benefit that offers little to low-income families. Pell Grants have been expanded, but the purchasing power of individual grants hasn’t kept pace with rising tuition.

Overall, American financial aid has gradually moved from a grant-based to a loan-based system. In 1980, 41 percent of all financial-aid dollars were in the form of loans; today 59 percent are. In the early 1990s Congress created a now enormous “no-need” loan program; it has been a boon for upper-income students, who can more easily afford to repay debts accrued during college. At the same time, the federal government allowed families to discount home equity when assessing their financial circumstances, making many more students eligible for loans that had previously been reserved for the poorest applicants. The burdens associated with loans may be part of the reason why only 41 percent of low-income students who enter four-year colleges graduate within five years, compared with 66 percent of high-income students.

All these policy changes have been politically popular, supported by Democratic and Republican politicians alike. After all, the current financial-aid system is good for those voters—middle-class and above—who already expect to send their kids to college, and who are more likely to take the cost of college into consideration when they vote. And though Americans support the ideal of universal educational opportunity, they also support the somewhat nebulous notion of merit and the idea that a high SAT score or

good grades should be rewarded with tuition discounts—especially when it’s their children’s grades and SAT scores that are being rewarded.

But it’s not enough to blame the self-interest of many universities or the pandering of politicians for the lack of socioeconomic diversity in higher education. There’s also the uncomfortable fact that a society in which education is so unevenly distributed may represent less a failure of meritocracy than its logical endpoint.

That the meritocracy would become hereditary was the fear of Michael Young, the British civil servant who coined the term. His novel *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958)—written in the form of a dry Ph.D. thesis that analyzed society from the vantage point of 2034—envisioned a future of ever more perfect intelligence tests and educational segregation, in which a cognitive elite holds

sway until the less intelligent masses rise to overthrow their brainy masters. A scenario of stratification by intelligence was raised again in 1971, in these pages, by the Harvard psychologist Richard Herrnstein, and in 1994 by Herrnstein and Charles Murray, in their controversial best seller *The Bell Curve*. That book is now remembered for suggesting the existence of ineradicable racial differences in IQ, but its larger argument was that America is segregated according to cognitive ability—and there’s nothing we can do about it.



Today Young’s dystopian fears and *The Bell Curve*’s self-consciously hardheaded realism seem simplistic; both reduce the complex questions of merit and success to a matter of IQ, easily tested and easily graphed. The role that inherited intelligence plays in personal success remains muddy and controversial, but most scholars reject the “Herrnstein Nightmare” (as the journalist Mickey Kaus dubbed it) of class division by IQ.

It doesn’t really matter, though, whether our meritocracy passes on success genetically, given how completely it is passed on through wealth and culture. The higher one goes up the income ladder, the greater the emphasis on education and the pressure from parents and peers to excel at extracurricular achievement—and the greater the likelihood of success. (Even the admissions advantage that many schools give to recruited athletes—often presumed to help low-income students—actually tends to disproportionately benefit the children of upper-income families,

perhaps because they are sent to high schools that encourage students to participate in a variety of sports.) In this inherited meritocracy the high-achieving kid will not only attend school with other high achievers but will also marry a high achiever and settle in a high-achieving area—the better to ensure that his children will have all the cultural advantages he enjoyed growing up.

Powerful though these cultural factors are, change is possible. The same studies that reveal just how class-defined American higher education remains also offer comfort for would-be reformers. Certainly, policies that strengthen families or improve elementary education undercut social stratification more effectively than anything colleges do. For now, however, numerous reasonably prepared students—300,000 a year, by one estimate—who aren't going to college could be. And many students who are less likely than their higher-income peers to attend the most selective schools would thrive if admitted.

The obvious way to reach these students is to institute some sort of class-based affirmative action—a “thumb on the scale” for low-income students that is championed by Bowen and by Carnevale and Rose in their analyses of educational inequality. Many elite universities claim to pursue such policies already, but Bowen's study finds *no* admissions advantage for poor applicants to the selective schools in the sample simply for being poor. In contrast, a recruited athlete is 30 percent more likely to be admitted than an otherwise identical applicant; a member of an under-represented minority is 28 percent more likely; and a “legacy” (alumni child) or a student who applies early is 20 percent more likely.

As an alternative Bowen and his co-authors propose that selective schools begin offering a 20 percent advantage to low-income students—a policy with “a nice kind of symbolic symmetry” to the advantage for legacies, they point out. By their calculations, this would raise the proportion of low-income students at the nineteen elite schools in their sample from 11 to 17 percent, without much impact on the schools' academic profiles.

Class-based affirmative action has an obvious political advantage: it's more popular with the public than race-based affirmative action. (Bowen envisions socioeconomic diversity as a supplement to racial diversity, not a replacement.) Increasing socioeconomic diversity might offer something to both sides of the red-blue divide—to a Democratic Party

rhetorically committed to equalizing opportunity, and to a Republican Party that increasingly represents the white working class, one of the groups most likely to benefit from having the scales weighted at elite universities.

But however happy this may sound in theory, one wonders how likely schools are to adopt class-based preferences. As Carnevale and Rose put it, doing so “would alienate politically powerful groups and help less powerful constituencies”; Bowen notes that it would reduce income from tuition and alumni giving. A selective school might court backlash every time it admitted a poor kid with, say, a middle-range SAT over an upper-middle-class kid with a perfect score. It's doubtful that many colleges would be willing to accept the losses—and, for the more selective among them, the possible drop in *U.S. News* rankings.

Even the elite of the elite—schools like the nineteen examined in Bowen's book, which are best able to afford the costs associated with class-based affirmative action—seem more inclined to increase financial aid than to revamp their admissions policies with an eye toward economic diversity. In the past several years schools like Harvard, Princeton, and Brown have shifted financial-aid dollars from loans to grants, helping to ensure a free ride for the neediest students once they get in. Such gestures make for good public relations, and they do help a few students—but they don't make it easier for low-income students to gain admission.

The benefits and the limitations of moving from loans to grants can be observed in the “AccessUVa” program at the University of Virginia, one of the schools in Bowen's sample. In 2003 it had a typical entering class for an elite school—58 percent of the students came from families with annual incomes above \$100,000—and in 2004 fewer than six percent of students came from families with incomes below \$40,000. In 2004 Virginia announced that for students with family incomes below 150 percent of the poverty line it would eliminate need-based loans and would instead offer grants exclusively (the school has since raised the threshold to include families of four making less than 200 percent of the poverty line, or about \$40,000). It would also cap the amount of debt any student could accrue, funding the rest of his or her tuition through grants. The school publicized its increased affordability, with large-scale outreach to poorer parts of the state. It's too early to judge the program's success, but the first year's results are



instructive: the number of low-income freshmen increased by nearly half, or sixty-six out of a class of about 3,100. This is a praiseworthy if small step: those sixty-six brought the low-income total to 199, or about six percent of the class. But it does not solve the problem of unequal access to higher education.

Significant improvements in access, if and when they come, will probably have little to do with the policies at the most elite schools. In America access ultimately rests on what happens in the vast middle rank of colleges and universities, where most undergraduates are educated—in particular, in state schools.

One thing that's unlikely to happen is a sudden increase in funding for higher education, along the lines of the post-World War II surge that made college possible for so many young people. The budgetary demands of swelling entitlements and military spending, the wariness of voters who perceive schools (sometimes rightly, usually wrongly) to be growing fat off their high tuition, and the cultural chasm between a Republican-controlled government and a letter-than-thou academy—all this and more ensures that spending on higher education will not leap to the top of the nation's political agenda. Instead, schools and legislators must be willing to experiment.

The good news is that there's no shortage of ideas. Bowen, for instance, points out that state schools might consider rethinking their relatively low tuition, which amounts to a subsidy for wealthy in-state parents. (Indeed, upper-income parents are increasingly choosing to send their children to state schools, presumably with just this advantage in mind.) These schools could keep their official tuition low while charging premiums for better-off applicants. Or they could follow the lead of Miami University, in Ohio, which recently raised in-state tuition to the same level as out-of-state tuition (from \$9,150 to \$19,730).

What should be done with the extra money? State governments might consider tying funding for schools more tightly to access—either directly, by rewarding those colleges that graduate larger numbers of low-income students, or indirectly, as Bowen and his co-authors suggest, by shifting funding from flagship universities to regional schools, which are more likely to enroll disadvantaged students.

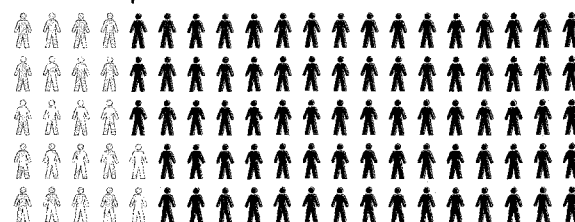
More radically, states might ask how well they are serving their populations by funding public universities directly and allowing the universities to disburse the funds as they see fit. If the point of a public university is to hire superstar faculty members, build world-class research facilities, and compete with Harvard and Yale, then perhaps this way of funding makes sense. (It's worth noting that since the 1970s public schools have spent an increasing share of their funds on research and administration rather than on instruction.) But if the point is to make higher education more accessible, it doesn't.

THE COLLEGE PIPELINE

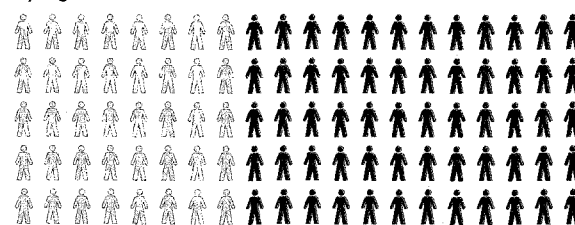
Some of the most basic information can also be the hardest to come by—and data about who moves on to what level of education, and when, is a classic case in point. Official education statistics often omit students when they switch schools, or when they drop out and then re-enroll. As a result, there is disagreement over precise numbers. The chart below, derived from a study that followed 12,000 eighth-graders from 1988 through 2000, represents the Department of Education's best available snapshot of what percentage of young people make it through college within twelve years of leaving the eighth grade.

OUT OF EVERY 100 EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS ...

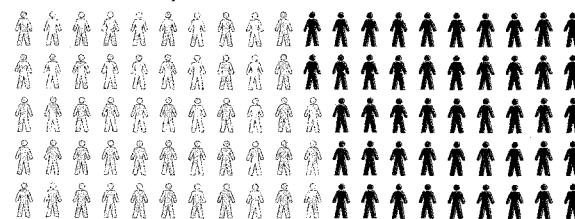
78 graduate from high school on time with a standard diploma



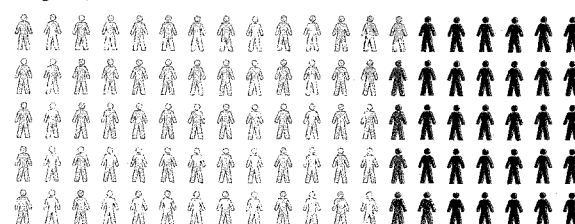
Of these, 60 start college (35 in a four-year college, 25 in a two-year college or trade school) by age 26 or 27



Of these, 47 remain in the post-secondary system after their first year



Twelve years after the eighth grade 29 have earned at least a bachelor's degree, five an associate's degree, and three a certificate



Sources: National Center for Education Statistics; National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988/2000 Postsecondary Transcript Files

The Ohio University economist Richard Vedder has suggested that states might consider offering less money to schools and more money to students, in the form of tuition vouchers redeemable at any public institution in their home state. These could be distributed according to financial need: if the average tuition in a state university system were \$15,000, a poor student might receive a voucher for \$15,000 and a wealthy student one for \$3,000. Schools would have less of a financial incentive to admit mostly rich students. Vouchers might also simplify filing for financial aid; the economist Thomas Kane has argued that the sheer complexity of this process deters many low-income students.

Like class-based affirmative action, a voucher program might be able to command support from both sides of the political aisle. The system's market-based efficiency would delight free marketeers (Vedder is affiliated with the conservative American Enterprise Institute), and its potential for increasing access might win the support of egalitarian liberals. And a voucher approach to funding state schools would mean less direct state involvement in higher education, which would please academics and administrators tired of having cost-conscious legislators looking over their shoulders.

A more egalitarian college-admissions system would run counter to the interests of upper-middle-class parents, who wield great influence in the politics of higher education.

Governments and public universities may also have lessons to learn from for-profit schools, which increasingly attract the students shut out of American higher education. Driven by bottom-line concerns, some of these schools enroll students who can't do the work, or promise job opportunities that never materialize. But many are oriented toward the needs of low-income populations. In New York State, for instance, some commercial schools set tuition at around \$9,000—exactly the amount that a needy student can expect to receive from a Pell Grant combined with the state's tuition-assistance program. And they tend to serve the kind of students that traditional universities are failing—working adults, for instance, looking for the economic advantages that come with a college degree.

What gives the for-profit schools a leg up is their ability to "unbundle" a college education from its traditional (and costly) campus environment—something made possible in large part by the spread of the Internet. Some for-profit schools are entirely Web-based. Many others have

put their reading lists, class registration, and even advising online. This is obviously not a model that a flagship state university is likely to emulate. But it may no longer make sense to spend a vast amount to sustain a traditional campus experience for the few when the same amount can provide an education for the many.

All these experiments—and that's what they are—have drawbacks. Public universities that spend more to improve access and graduation rates could make up for the expense by cutting, say, faculty salaries. Public schools already have a hard time keeping sought-after teachers from jumping to private colleges; if more money were spent enrolling and graduating poorer students, the problem would only worsen.

And the more that market efficiency was brought to bear on higher education, and the more that degree-granting and graduation rates were emphasized over the traditional academic experience, the more the liberal arts would be likely to suffer. Computer classes would crowd out Shakespeare, management courses would replace musical instruction, everyone would learn Spanish and no one Greek. Who would speak up to save liberal education?

The most obvious drawback is that a more egalitarian system, in which a college degree is nearly universal and therefore a less exclusive pathway to later success, would run counter to the interests of upper-middle-class parents—the people who wield the most influence in the politics of higher education. It's elite Americans who would lose out in class-based affirmative action. It's elite Americans who would pay more if state schools raised their tuition and state governments handed out income-adjusted vouchers. And it's elite Americans who would lose some of their standing if educational opportunity were more widely distributed. Why should they give it up? *It's not as if our child doesn't deserve his advantages*, parents might say, after helping that child rack up not only high grades and SAT scores but also a sterling record of community service.

What, really, does an eighteen-year-old high achiever "deserve"? A good college education, certainly—but surely not the kind of advantage that college graduates now enjoy. As Nicholas Lemann put it in *The Big Test*, his history of the American meritocracy, "Let us say you wanted to design a system that would distribute opportunity in the most unfair possible way. A first choice would be one in which all roles were inherited ... A second unfair system might be one that allowed for competition but insisted that it take place as early in life as possible and with school as the arena." Students should be rewarded for academic achievement. But twelve years of parentally subsidized achievement should not hand them an advantage for the next fifty years of their lives. ▀

Ross Douhat is a reporter-researcher for The Atlantic and the author of Privilege: Harvard and the Education of the Ruling Class.

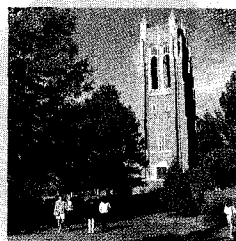
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The Best Class Money Can Buy

The rise of the "enrollment manager" and the cutthroat quest for competitive advantage. The secret weapon: financial-aid leveraging

BY MATTHEW QUIRK

I asked Bob Bontrager what he thought about eating other people's lunches.

"I personally prefer kicking their ass," he replied. "It's a zero-sum game. There's a finite number of prospective students out there. Are you going to get them, or is your competitor going to get them? You face the pressure and say, 'That feels burdensome to me; I don't want to deal with that.' Or you say, 'That's a pretty interesting challenge; I'm going to go out there and try to eat their lunch. I'm going to try to kick their ass.' That defines people who are more or less successful and those who stay in the position."

Bontrager, who works at Oregon State University, is the school's head of enrollment management—a relatively new but increasingly essential post in higher education. Three quarters of four-year colleges and universities employ an enrollment manager to oversee admissions and financial aid. The position is standard at private schools, and is spreading quickly across public institutions.

Eating the other guy's lunch is one of several turns of phrase (most involving some sort of predatory snacking) used to evoke the competition for prestige and revenue that has led to the rise of the enrollment manager. If you've snatched up another school's top prospects or leapfrogged it in the *U.S. News* rankings, you've eaten its lunch.

Over the past twenty years, often under cover of the euphemisms with which the industry abounds, enrollment management has transformed admissions and financial aid, and in some cases the entire mission of a college or a university. At its most advanced it has a hand in every interaction between a student and a school, from the crafting of a school's image all the way through to the student's successful graduation. Any aspect of university life that bears on a school's place in the collegiate pecking order is fair game: academic advising, student services, even the curriculum itself. Borrowing the most sophisticated techniques of business strategy, enrollment managers have installed market-driven competition at the heart of the university.

With their ever-expanding reach, enrollment managers are inevitably dogged by controversy. But it's the way they have changed financial aid—from a tool to help low-income students into a strategic weapon to entice wealthy and high-scoring students—that has placed them in the crosshairs of those who champion equal access to higher education.

Adopting data-mining and pricing techniques from the airline and marketing industries, they have developed a practice called financial-aid leveraging that allows a school to buy, within certain limits, whatever class it wants. Often under orders from a president and trustees, enrollment managers direct financial aid to students who will increase a school's revenues and rankings. They have a host of ugly tactics to deter low-income students and to extract as much money as possible from each entering class.

All this, understandably, has given the enrollment-management industry a black eye. "It's a brilliantly analytical process of screwing the poor kids," says Gordon Winston, an economist at Williams, and an article last year in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* included a warning that "enrollment managers are ruining American higher education." But some in the industry use its techniques responsibly—to guarantee enough revenue to support the academic mission, or even to expand low-income access to higher education. Indeed, the sophisticated methods of enrollment management may be the only way for schools to hang on to their principles while surviving in a cutthroat marketplace.

Bob Bontrager offered his paean to ass-kicking over drinks at the annual meeting of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, which over the past ten years has made itself the center of the enrollment-management industry. AACRAO publishes how-to guides for enrollment managers, and hosts national conferences at which they plot strategy, while consulting firms offer promises of greater profits and prestige.

I had met Bontrager the day before, at a session of his Enrollment Management 101: The Basics in Best Practices, where the industry's troubled conscience was very much in evidence. The first person I spoke with was there because her school was considering "being more strategic with institutional aid"—a euphemism for financial-aid leveraging. When I asked for her name, she flipped over her badge and hid it against her chest.

At another session Cliff Sjogren, a well-respected former director of admissions at the University of Michigan and the University of Southern California, had packed a room for a presentation in which he called for an end to financial aid that isn't based on a student's need—merit aid, as it is called, which goes largely to higher-income families. It's

wrong to give money to people who don't need it, he said, if that means turning away students who do.

Then the audience started pushing back.

"A lot of us would agree with most if not all of the things you said," said Rob Seltzer, the director of admissions at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. "But as a director of admissions I have a hard time with unilateral disarmament. I'm really concerned, even if I could talk my institution into doing these items, that I can't do it without losing serious competitive advantage."

Roger Thompson, the associate vice-president for enrollment management at the University of Alabama, which has jumped twelve spots in the *U.S. News* rankings of public universities over the past four years, stood up. "Merit scholarships," he said. "I hate it. It's almost like buying a car. But the rankings are driving so much of that. You have to have X number of National Merit Scholars and all that. The rankings thing is out of the barn."

Financial-aid leveraging is the enrollment manager's secret weapon. It has become highly sophisticated since it was first developed, in the 1980s, but the underlying logic remains simple: targeting financial aid will further the interests of a school, typically by bringing in more net revenue or higher-scoring students. Take a \$20,000 scholarship—the full tuition for a needy student at some schools. Break it into four scholarships of \$5,000 each for wealthier students who would probably go elsewhere without the discounts but will pay the outstanding tuition if they can be lured to your school. Over four years the school will reap an extra \$240,000, which can be used to buy more rich students—or gifted students who will improve the school's profile and thus its desirability and revenue.

In the early 1990s, when merit aid first began to flourish, the rule of thumb was that \$1,000 could tip the decision for a student on the fence between two institutions; \$4,000 would get him to accept his second choice, and \$6,000 his third choice. (Colleges can determine students' preferences from the questionnaires that all students fill out before taking a College Board or ACT test.) Armed with this knowledge, private schools went on a spending spree, buying up "meritorious" students (defined as gifted or rich, but ideally both). And public schools jumped at the technique as well: from 1992 to 2000 the proportion of state aid based on merit rose from just under 10 percent, where it had hovered throughout the 1980s, to 25 percent.

Since 1990 the average discount on "sticker-price" tuition has risen from 26.5 percent to just under 40 percent, and the proportion of students not paying full price has grown from 62.5 percent to 80 percent. The resulting confusion about the actual cost of college gives the enrollment manager a free hand to manipulate prices for individuals.

To decide how to parcel out financial aid, the enrollment manager puts admitted students onto a grid with need on one axis and academic ability on the other. This is called "segmenting the class" or "table analysis." The school then adjusts financial aid for students by group, with the goal of increasing the "yield rate" for the most desirable prospects—typically academic stars and those willing to pay most or all of the tuition ("full-pays"). A school with a revenue problem puts its money toward rich students; a school that's going after prestige pushes it toward students with high SAT scores. Where the school might be paying more than is nec-

essary to attract a candidate (for a wealthy student with low grades, for instance, or an in-state student with few other options), aid is cut accordingly. Some schools are content to fine-tune their financial-aid packages for different groups by trial and error from year to year. But more-advanced enrollment managers, and all the major consulting companies, use a statistical method called logistical regression to determine how each group will respond to a different award, based on how students have behaved in the past.

One of the basic texts of enrollment management recommends a book about pricing techniques developed by the airlines: *Revenue Management: Hard-Core Tactics for Market Domination*. Using the logic of the Saturday-night stay and the fourteen-day advance purchase, advanced financial-aid leveraging goes beyond general categories to forecast how much each student is willing to pay, and guarantee the best class at the lowest price. Schools and consultants combine test scores, grades, and class rankings from the testing services and students' high schools with demographic and financial data purchased from a credit-reporting agency such as Equifax. All this information is eventually reduced to the seven or eight variables that best predict a student's responsiveness to price.

In the least desirable categories (usually poor students with lower test scores) accepted students are often "gapped"—given a fraction of what they would need to attend, even after the maximum possible contribution from their families. (A school interested mainly in revenue might even give more



money to a wealthy student with lousy scores than to a better-qualified poor student.) Some schools leave gaps as high as \$34,000 a year. From 1995 to 1999 the average unmet need for families earning over \$60,000 either stayed constant or narrowed slightly; for families earning \$40,000 to \$60,000 it grew by three percent; and for families earning under \$40,000 it grew by 27 percent. Some schools have no choice but to gap students once they've exhausted their aid budgets. Others will intentionally gap poor students so severely that they decide not to attend in the first place—or, if they enroll, the long hours of work-study and mounting debts eventually force them to drop out. Called “admit-deny,” this practice allows a college to keep poor students out while publicly claiming that it doesn't consider a student's finances when making admissions decisions.

At its worst, “enrollment management” employs a host of ugly tactics to deter low-income students and to extract as much money as possible from each entering class.

“Admit-deny is when you give someone a financial-aid package that is so rotten that you hope they get the message: ‘Don't come,’” says Mark Heffron, a senior vice-president at Noel-Levitz, one of the largest enrollment-management consulting companies. (His financial-aid division currently has 140 clients.) Unfortunately, “they don't always get the message.” When consulting for a school that gaps students to a point where they are likely to drop out, Heffron encourages schools to call students and tell them that unless they can find an additional source of money—such as a generous relative—they should decline the offer of admission.

However nasty, admit-deny allows schools to avoid the controversy associated with publicly abandoning need-blind admissions. That students are rejected on the basis of income is one of the most closely held secrets in admissions; enrollment managers say the practice is far more prevalent than most schools let on.

“Good luck getting any institution to tell you exactly how they handle ability to pay as a driver in their admit decision,” said one enrollment manager who requested anonymity. “What they will say is ‘We're need-blind.’ That's bullshit. They would never tell you exactly how they do it, but they do it all the time.”

Schools also use detailed data to systematically cut aid to students whose behavior shows they are likely to accept admission anyway. A student who lists a school first when asked where to send test scores, files for financial aid with that school, and then visits campus has tipped his hand, and

some schools will figure, why waste money to attract a sure thing? Understandably, schools don't publicize this practice: in 1996 Johns Hopkins found itself on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal* for even considering it. The incident remains notorious in enrollment-management circles.

“I think that's self-defeating, and first of all I don't like the morality of it,” Heffron told me. “It's one of those things where if anyone finds out you're doing it, you're dead.”

The demand for revenue and prestige also increasingly controls the earlier, mass-marketing and recruitment stages of the admissions “funnel,” by which a student goes, in the industry lingo, from “suspect” to “prospect” to “admit” to “matric.” The ACT and the College Board don't just sell hundreds of thousands of student profiles to schools; they also offer software and consulting services that can be used to set crude wealth and test-score cutoffs, to target or eliminate students before they apply.

At the AACRAO conference two members of the University of Alabama's enrollment-management team demonstrated how, in their campaign for out-of-state prospects, they overlaid income data from the U.S. Census on maps of high schools in Texas to target wealthy students. (Alabama's data-mining strategies are inspired by the success of the credit-card company Capital One.) After the presentation I sat down with Roger Thompson and asked him how he approached recruiting at rich private secondary schools.

“Oh, if you're in enrollment management, those schools are fantastic!” he said. “There are some kids there that we'll buy. The National Merit kids, they're going to get a full ride. But if you're sitting at a private high school in Florida, where they pay twenty grand to go, we don't even bring financial-aid material. What's the point? You don't even need to talk about cost.”

SAT and ACT scores, both because of their importance in determining college rankings and because the testing services are the main sources for “leads,” carry special weight in this process, although their value in predicting a student's ultimate success at college is highly questionable. Brian Zucker, the head of Human Capital Research, an enrollment-management consulting firm, measures the correlation between SAT score and freshman GPA for his clients and typically gets results between .03 and .14 on a scale from 0 to 1. (“I might as well measure their shoe size,” he says.) Nevertheless, because the enrollment manager pursues hundreds of thousands of purchased leads rather than waiting for students to come to him (the “gatekeeper” model of admissions has been dead for some time), schools make thousands of decisions based largely on test scores long before students even apply, locking some students out of colleges where they might have thrived.

“It's made schools lazy and stupid at the same time,” Zucker says of these tactics. “It's a blunt object, a pre-sorting mechanism, and it's a great labor-saving device. What a convenience! I can look and say you're an 1150, you're going to

be all right—instead of having to pore over this thing and wring my hands and justify taking a chance because this kid's got an average of X but I'm seeing things that make the case as an individual. That takes work.

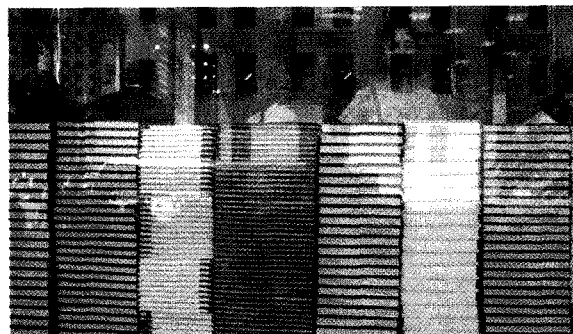
"The real opportunity costs are not the billions we're throwing out in marketing. It's the opportunity cost of looking past literally millions of kids who would do a great job."

Enrollment management has spread so quickly across American higher education because it gives many college presidents and trustees exactly what they want. The major enrollment-management consulting firms tout "before" and "after" profiles of satisfied colleges. Maguire Associates, by shifting from need-based aid to merit aid, has bumped up a school's average SAT score from 1350 to 1380 while increasing revenues by 162 percent. Noel-Levitz has increased an average SAT by fifty points, raised an average GPA from 3.48 to 3.62, and dropped the acceptance rate by 13 percent; it has boosted the number of "no-need" students—those who don't even request financial aid—by 60 to 70 percent, and the number of minority students by 20 to 40 percent; it even expanded one college's freshman class by 3,000 students.

The consultants say they never tell schools what to do—they only present options. After they've worked up a model of how students will respond to different aid packages, the next step is to create a menu of sorts, detailing the different entering classes a school could have if it adopted their techniques. One option will almost always maximize net revenue; others might emphasize total enrollment, academic quality, ethnic diversity, or the enrollment in a specific program, such as engineering. Each potential class on the list comes with tradeoffs; generally, academic quality, revenue, or diversity can each be increased, but only at the cost of the other two attributes. In the business these costs are known as "the price of your principles."

Low-income students often suffer in this process. They drag on both revenue and academic profile, and it's hard for outsiders to tell when their numbers are reduced. Although universities are required to report gender and racial diversity to the Department of Education, their income data can be gauged only through rough proxies—for example, the number of Pell Grant recipients. When David Kalsbeek arrived at DePaul University, where he is the vice-president for enrollment management, he wanted to measure how the school—founded by Vincentian friars—was living up to its mission of educating poor and first-generation college students. He called all the major consulting firms, and none had a satisfactory response.

Though they may dislike cutting the number of poor students, presidents and trustees are held accountable for a school's place in the pecking order. "There's pressure for rankings," says Tom Green, the associate vice-president for enrollment services at Seton Hall. "There's no doubt



THE HIDDEN COSTS OF COLLEGE

Sending your child to college is expensive, and tuition is only the beginning. A student at a four-year college shells out, on average, well over \$9,000 for day-to-day expenses while on campus—and that doesn't include pricey necessities such as computers and cell phones, quasi-necessities such as televisions and DVD players, and the cost of participating in such college rituals as summer in Europe and spring break in South Beach or Cancún. Some of this is paid for by summer and term-time jobs, and some by credit cards: by sophomore year more than seven out of ten students have at least one card, and by senior year students carry an average of \$2,864 in debt spread over five cards. But much of it, inevitably, is paid for by parents, roughly half of whom buy their child's computer (average price: \$1,316), and 62 percent of whom send allowance money from home. The average allowance is \$236 a month—or about \$7,500 over four years. —NATHAN LITTLEFIELD

THE BASICS

Student spending per four-month semester on ...

Dining off campus	\$280
Dining on campus	\$204
Entertainment (movies, concerts, etc.)	\$160
Books (not for class)	\$68
School supplies	\$68
Music	\$64
Textbooks, new	\$224
Textbooks, used	\$114
SUBTOTAL (per semester)	\$1,182
TOTAL (four years)	\$9,456

THE LUXURIES

Proportion of students who ...

Have a cell phone	89%
Own a computer	88%
Own a television	84%
Own a DVD player	73%
Own a stereo system	50%
Own an iPod (or other MP3 player)	15%
Traveled overseas in the past year	31%

THE CREDIT CARDS

	1st yr.	2nd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.
Proportion who have cards	42%	72%	83%	91%
Average number of cards	2.26	3.44	4.0	5.07

Sources: Lifestyle and Media Survey, Computing and the Internet Survey, Student Monitor; "Undergraduate Students and Credit Cards in 2004," Nellie Mae

about it. Presidents get pressure from board members, from alumni. They'll say, 'You're number eighty-seven. How are you going to get to be number eighty-five?'" Eugene Trani, the president of Virginia Commonwealth University, a Tier III school in the *U.S. News* rankings, carries a laminated card in his pocket to remind him of the school's strategic goal of making it to the next tier. For every year the school stays in the higher tier he will receive a \$25,000 bonus—a fact first reported by *ACB Priorities*, an industry newsletter. A vice-president at Hobart and William Smith was fired when she failed to report current data to *U.S. News* and the school's ranking dropped from Tier II to Tier III. The incoming president spent the early part of his tenure repairing the damage.

Trustees also bring their own values to the table. "There are trustees who think that scholarships will make a kid's mind turn to mush—after all, they worked their way through school," Mark Heffron says. "On the other hand, they're incredibly rich and can't understand why anybody would think forty thousand dollars a year is a lot to send your kid to school."

Several of Seton Hall's trustees attended the school in the 1960s, when it served blue-collar "good Catholic families from New Jersey," as Tom Green puts it. The school has since become far more selective, and more expensive. "Today we're a top-tier, national, major Catholic university in the United States," Green says. "They love that. But they hate the fact that we're now too expensive and too selective to serve working-class blue-collar New Jersey families who are first-generation. I'm happy to do either, because I see the benefit of both, but there's not enough money to field both teams."

Stanley Henderson, a former AACRAO president and currently vice-chancellor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, says that even tempting the leadership with these tradeoff tables is unethical. "It's the charlatans who will present this in a way that says, 'We can give you whatever you want and here are the data that show you what we can do,'" he told me. Instead, Henderson argues, the enrollment manager should balance the demands of the marketplace against the values of the institution and go to the president and trustees as an advocate for the best possible compromise.

But enrollment managers are often effectively ordered to squeeze more money out of poor students—"to nickel and dime these families making \$48,000 a year," as Zucker puts it. Their continued employment depends on meeting specific goals. "You're only as good as your last fall's enrollment," Kalsbeek says. "You're wanting people to take this grand, principled, big-picture perspective on their work, but holy shit, you miss your target and you're gone."

The enrollment managers I spoke with weren't blind to where this was all heading, and the populations they were leaving behind—North Jersey's blue-collar families,

Alabama's blacks and rural poor—were very much on their minds. Roger Thompson's university isn't yet so selective that he has to cut off poor but able students—and, he told me, "I don't really want to get there. I still want that kid from Jackson, Alabama. His father's a truck driver making seventeen grand a year, and no one's graduated from high school in the family, and the kid's got a twenty-four, or let's say a twenty, ACT. I want that kid to have a chance."

Only the most ruthless single-mindedly pursue profits or prestige at the expense of low-income and minority students. "It's really up to the institutions," Heffron says. "Many schools will tell us, 'Even though we can get fewer needy students to come, that's not what we're going to do. We're not cutting everyone until they squeak.'" Many schools mix the merit and need-based approaches, using the techniques simply to guarantee that they have enough students and revenue to stay afloat. And although competition increasingly threatens a university's principles, the most innovative work in the profession comes from enrollment managers who attempt to align market with mission.

David Kalsbeek, for instance, has an impressive record: DePaul is now the largest Catholic and the eighth largest private school in the country, and it's home to a top-ranked M.B.A. program. But those successes, built by Kalsbeek's formidable corporate tools and overseen from his corner office high above downtown Chicago (his 175-person division resembles a small consulting firm), allow the Vincennes to underwrite the school's commitment to educating poor first-generation Chicago students, rather than scrambling up the *U.S. News* rankings.

"No margin, no mission" is the watchword at DePaul. By expanding its profitable professional programs and slowly improving its faculty, campus, and marketing to attract more students, especially full-pays, the school has brought in enough revenue to enroll more low-income students. As a result, 26 percent of undergraduates have family incomes below \$36,000, and 38 percent are the first in their families to attend college.

Tally Hart, a veteran advocate of need-based aid at the national level, is another enrollment manager who has found that the demands of ethics and the marketplace can pull in the same direction. When she joined the enrollment-management team at Ohio State University, she says, "My friends thought I just checked my morals at the border. I honestly don't think that many people thought about how enrollment management might be used for optimization of other things, like needy students." OSU was one of the first public schools to adopt the financial-aid leveraging (Hart prefers "management") techniques developed for private schools, but it retooled them to improve economic diversity and academic quality, not just revenue. Even merit aid can make college more accessible to the poor, if the additional revenue it generates is funneled back into need-based



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aid. When I asked which tradeoffs she faced, Hart replied, "None." Precise recruiting lets her find students who will increase socioeconomic diversity and academic quality, and also bring extra revenue in the form of state grants for low-income students. With those additional funds (which vary enormously from state to state) low-income students can actually bring more net revenue than their richer peers.

More-advanced enrollment managers also tend to focus as much on retaining admitted students as on deciding whom to recruit and accept. They smooth out administrative hassles, guarantee at-risk students the advising and academic help they need, and ensure that the different parts of the university's bureaucracy work together to get students out the door with a degree. The more schools consider how students will fit in and succeed, the less likely they are to gap them excessively or bribe them to come—practices that tend to hurt graduation rates (and rankings).

Admittedly, using enrollment management responsibly—finding the right students for each school and graduating them successfully—requires more hard work than simply hiring consultants to chase wealthy and high-scoring students. But the challenge is what people like Kalsbeek and Hart find appealing.

"All the acclaim in law goes to the lawyer who wins the unwinnable case, in medicine to the doctor who cures the incurable disease," Kalsbeek says. "In higher education it's the people who enroll the best and the brightest and then manage to graduate them?"

"I had a conversation with an institution not too long ago that was interested in having me come on board, top tier. They wanted a larger share of their freshman class to have them as first choice, rather than as a second choice to an Ivy-caliber competitor. Why would you even get out of bed in the morning?"

"We need places like that—we just don't need any more."

Nevertheless, competition draws a growing number of schools to the ugly side of enrollment management. "If you're sitting out there, you're not Harvard, and your competitors are offering merit-based aid, you've got to compete," Heffron says. "If you don't, you're going to fall on your moral sword."

The process only gets more intense each year. In April, as students are making their decisions, admissions officers grow anxious about whether they will hit their numbers. Kalsbeek relates an anecdote about a colleague, Jim DiRisio, the director of admissions at St. Bonaventure, who was serving in Iraq as a major in the Army Reserves. Being stationed in Baghdad, DiRisio said, provided the first time in ten years he had gotten a good night's sleep in April.

The most elite schools, cushioned by their wealth and the huge number of applications they get each year, have remained somewhat above the fray, maintaining strictly

enforced firewalls between admission and financial aid. But they, too, use "preferential packaging" to give larger grants to more-desirable students. And the commitment to meeting need at some of these schools is under threat.

"The dilemma is you have this small number of institutions committed to need-blind admissions and need-based financial aid only," says Ronald Ehrenberg, an economist and a former vice-president at Cornell who studies higher education. "There can't be any more than twenty or thirty. Now we have these institutions that are a little below us in the prestige pecking order aggressively pursuing a merit-aid strategy. And the question is, How long will places like Cornell be able to continue to maintain these sets of principles?"

As wealthy, high-scoring students command higher and higher tuition discounts, they leave a smaller and smaller proportion of the financial-aid budget for poor students.

USC, Carnegie Mellon, Tulane, Washington University in St. Louis, NYU, Syracuse, Boston College, and Boston University are among the highest-profile schools committed to ambitious enrollment-management strategies. Other schools are being forced to adopt enrollment-management practices to hold their position, or just to survive. Gordon Winston receives pleading calls from colleges: A small, well-known liberal arts school finds that its best prospects are being poached by other colleges' enrollment managers, so it parries by adopting the same tools. A Catholic school in Brooklyn also finds that students are being lured away, but it is simply too poor to do anything about it.

More and more, schools are chasing the small number of students who have the money or the test scores that help an institution get ahead. As those students command higher and higher tuition discounts, they leave a smaller and smaller proportion of the financial-aid budget for poor students, who are increasingly at risk of being left out of higher education.

"This '05-'06 cycle, it's brutal," Brian Zucker says. "I can't believe the ridiculous competing offers that I'm seeing out there. The arms race has gone completely unchecked. Institutions are still not getting it. I'm seeing it from all kinds of schools. Schools that really surprise me that they're playing these games, because I thought they were better than that and I thought they had the bigger picture. But I guess not." ■

Matthew Quirk is an Atlantic Monthly reporter-researcher.

8 out of 10 Americans don't get enough sleep.*

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Satisfied owner survey conducted by Alpert O'Neil Tigre & Co. August 2003

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Is There Life After Rankings?

A report card from one college president, whose school now shuns the U.S. News ranking system—and has not only survived but thrived

BY COLIN DIVER

Three years ago I experienced a form of liberation denied to most of my peers in higher education. I left the University of Pennsylvania, where, as dean of its law school, I had lived under the *U.S. News & World Report* ranking system for ten years, and assumed the presidency of Reed College, one of a handful of American institutions of higher education that refuse to cooperate with that system.

For ten years Reed has declined to fill out the annual peer evaluations and statistical surveys that *U.S. News* uses to compile its rankings. It has three primary reasons for doing so. First, one-size-fits-all ranking schemes undermine the institutional diversity that characterizes American higher education. The urge to improve one's ranking creates an irresistible pressure toward homogeneity, and schools that, like Reed, strive to be different are almost inevitably penalized. Second, the rankings reinforce a view of education as strictly instrumental to extrinsic goals such as prestige or wealth; this is antithetical to Reed's philosophy that higher education should produce intrinsic rewards such as liberation and self-realization. Third, rankings create powerful incentives to manipulate data and distort institutional behavior for the sole or primary purpose of inflating one's score. Because the rankings depend heavily on unaudited, self-reported data, there is no way to ensure either the accuracy of the information or the reliability of the resulting rankings.

When Reed's former president Steven Koblik decided to stop submitting data to *U.S. News*, he asked the magazine simply to omit Reed from its listings. Instead the editors arbitrarily assigned the lowest possible value to each of Reed's missing variables, with the result that Reed dropped in one year from the second quartile to the bottom quartile. After the predictable outcry, *U.S. News* purportedly began to rank Reed based on information available from other sources. In subsequent years that procedure usually placed the college somewhere in the middle of the second quartile, with a footnote stating that we "refused to fill out the *U.S. News* statistical survey," and claiming to base the ranking on data from published sources. But since much of the information needed to complete the magazine's ranking algorithm is unpublished, one can only guess how the editors arrive at a value.

Reed's experience has not gone unnoticed. In a recent conversation with me the president of a leading liberal arts college lamented the distortions and deceptions that the ranking process engenders. When I suggested that he follow

our example, he replied, "We can't. They will just plug in their own data, and we'll drop ten places in the rankings!" Criticism of the rankings is nearly unanimous, but so is compliance with them. According to the latest statistics supplied by *U.S. News*, only five percent of surveyed colleges and universities fail to submit the statistical questionnaire. In the words of another of my fellow presidents, "The rankings are merely intolerable; unilateral disarmament is suicide."

Far from committing suicide, Reed College has survived. Indeed, it has thrived. Over the past ten years the number of applicants has increased by 27 percent, and the quality of entering students, as indicated both by conventional SAT and GPA measures and by Reed's internal "reader rating" system, has steadily increased—it is far higher than suggested by our nominal place in the *U.S. News* pecking order. More important, Reed continues to offer an academic program widely recognized for its uncommon rigor, intellectual structure, and theoretical depth. Its students continue at unusually high rates to participate in faculty research and to earn competitive prizes and fellowships. The college continues to set the pace in the percentage of its graduates who go on to earn a Ph.D.

At professional meetings my colleagues often ask, "What is life like outside the rankings rat race?" and "How has Reed survived?"

Not cooperating with the rankings affects my life and the life of the college in several ways. Some are relatively trivial; for instance, we are saved the trouble of filling out *U.S. News*'s forms, which include a statistical survey that has gradually grown to 656 questions and a peer evaluation for which I'm asked to rank some 220 liberal arts schools nationwide into five tiers of quality. Contemplating the latter, I wonder how any human being could possess, in the words of the cover letter, "the broad experience and expertise needed to assess the academic quality" of more than a tiny handful of these institutions. Of course, I could check off "don't know" next to any institution, but if I did so honestly, I would end up ranking only the few schools with which Reed directly competes or about which I happen to know from personal experience. Most of what I may *think* I know about the others is based on badly outdated information, fragmentary impressions, or the relative place of a school in the rankings-validated and rankings-influenced pecking order.

A somewhat more important consequence of Reed's

rebellious stance is the freedom from temptation to game the ratings formula (or, assuming that we would resist that temptation, from the nagging suspicion that we were competing in a rigged competition). Since the mid-1990s numerous stories in the popular press have documented how various schools distort their standard operating procedures, creatively interpret survey instructions, or boldly misreport information in order to raise their rankings. Such practices have included failing to report low SAT scores from foreign students, “legacies,” recruited athletes, or members of other “special admission” categories; exaggerating per capita instructional expenditures by misclassifying expenses for athletics, faculty research, and auxiliary enterprises; artificially driving up the number of applicants by counting as a completed application the first step of a “two-part” application process; and inflating the yield rate by rejecting or wait-listing the highest achievers in the applicant pool (who are least likely to come if admitted). Rumors of these practices and many others like them were rampant in education circles in the early years of formulaic ranking. I was struck, however, in reading a recent *New York Times* article, by how the art of gaming has evolved in my former world of legal education, where ranking pressure is particularly intense. The *Times* reported that some law schools inflate their graduate-employment rates by hiring unemployed graduates for “short-term legal research positions.” Some law schools have found that they can raise their “student selectivity” (based in part on LSAT scores and GPAs for entering students) by admitting fewer full-time first-year students and more part-time and transfer students (two categories for which data do not have to be reported). At least one creative law school reportedly inflated its “expenditures per student” by using an imputed “fair market value,” rather than the actual rate, to calculate the cost of computerized research services (provided by LexisNexis and Westlaw). The “fair market value” (which a law firm would have paid) differed from what the law school actually paid (at the providers’ educational rate) by a factor of eighty!

Gaming the peer evaluations is harder, but some survey responders are not above “dumping” their schools’ closest peers into the bottom tier so as to undermine the competition. Perhaps the most common tactic is simple self-promotion. When I was a law-school dean, my mailbox would begin to fill up about a month before *U.S. News*’s annual “beauty contest” questionnaire arrived—with glossy admissions brochures, alumni magazines, lists of faculty publications, and breathless announcements of new buildings and academic symposia, all accompanied by bland cover letters from my counterparts expressing the thought that I might find the enclosures interesting and illuminating. In my ten years as dean I only once received a cover letter that came right out and said what every other letter wanted to say: “When the *U.S. News* opinion survey comes out next week, please keep our law school in mind.”

By far the most important consequence of sitting out the rankings game, however, is the freedom to pursue our own educational philosophy, not that of some newsmagazine. Consider, for example, the relative importance of standardized tests. The SAT or ACT scores of entering freshmen make up half of the important “student selectivity” score in the *U.S. News* formula. Although we at Reed find SAT and ACT scores useful, they receive a good deal less weight in our admissions process. We have found that high school performance (which we measure by a complex formula that weighs GPA, class rank, quality and difficulty of courses, quality of the high school, counselor evaluation, and so forth) is a much better predictor of performance at Reed. Likewise, we have found that the quality of a student’s application essay and other “soft variables,” such as character, involvement, and intellectual curiosity, are just as important as the “hard variables” that provide the sole basis for the *U.S. News* rankings. We are free to admit the students we think will thrive at Reed and contribute to its intellectual atmosphere, rather than those we think will elevate our standing on *U.S. News*’s list.

U.S. News also gives very substantial weight (25 percent

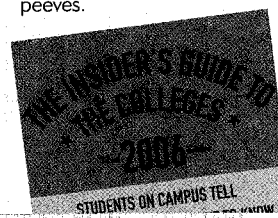
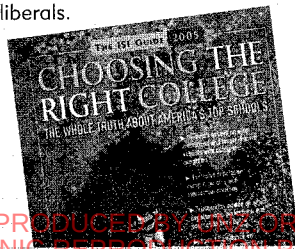
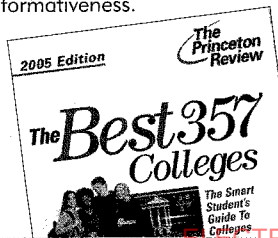
The most important consequence of sitting out the rankings game is that Reed has the freedom to pursue its own educational philosophy, not that of some newsmagazine.

of its overall formula) to student-retention and graduation rates. But it is far from clear that high student retention is the unmixed blessing implied by that formula. Rewarding high retention and graduation rates encourages schools to focus on pleasing students rather than on pushing them. Pleasing students *can* mean superb educational programs precisely tailored to their needs; but it can also mean dumbing down graduation requirements, lessening educational rigor, inflating grades, and emphasizing nonacademic amenities. At Reed we have felt free to pursue an educational philosophy that maintains rigor and structure—including a strong core curriculum in the humanities, extensive distribution requirements, a junior qualifying examination in one’s major, a required senior thesis, uninflated grades (not reported to students unless they request them), heavy workloads, and graduate-level standards in many courses. We have also felt free to resist pressure to provide an expensive and highly selective program of varsity athletics and other nonacademic enticements simply for their marketing advantages. Not surprisingly, our attrition rates, though declining steadily, are higher than those at the highest-ranked schools.

GUIDE TO THE GUIDES

In 1979 the education expert Edward Fiske warned in these pages of a "promotional and marketing mentality" in the college-admissions process. Today his Fiske Guide to Colleges, one of the first to grade schools nationwide, fights for shelf space with a raft of competing rankings—a selection of which are evaluated here.

TITLE	The Best 357 Colleges <i>Princeton Review</i>	Choosing the Right College <i>Intercollegiate Studies Institute</i>	America's Best Colleges <i>U.S. News & World Report</i>	The Insider's Guide to the Colleges 2006 <i>Yale Daily News</i>
ANGLE	The Margaret Mead of the dorm room. Wide-ranging and dishy descriptions of both academics and day-to-day life on campus: the quality of cafeteria food; the availability of parties, booze, and drugs; and the happiness level of the student body.	Bill Buckley without the wit. The emphasis is on "right"; it's an "absolutely prejudiced" (and long-winded) guide for students who prefer their academic canons and administration buildings unmolested.	The 800-pound gorilla. It has made itself the arbiter of higher education's pecking order by sorting 1,400 schools into tiers and rankings based on a single ostensibly comprehensive formula.	The Ivy League lowdown. A bunch of ink-stained Elis get dirt on academics, campus environment, and the social scene from their peers at other schools, and offer a perspective unfiltered by grown-ups.
TONE	ENCYCLOPEDIA. Ratings of a school's quality of life and most distinctive features lead into a short essay that breaks down academics, student life, and the makeup of the student body. The often provocative quotations offer such nitty-gritty details as whether a school is cliquey and how much people cheat.	HISTORY TEXTBOOK. This guide has the highest page-to-college ratio of all; a long narrative history of each school ("In 1833 Alsatian pastor John Fredrick Oberlin sent two Yankee ministers west to found a college ...") offers every detail on professors, campus politics, and courses about dead white males that a conservative might want.	FINANCIAL PAGES. A delight for those who dream in spreadsheets, this guide consists of page after page of eye-glazing data, and lacks the details that bring a school to life. (It does, however, offer a long essay on how to game every part of the admissions process, from test prep to financial aid.)	GOSSIP SHEET. Offers an unvarnished view of college life, through snarky anonymous quotations: Caltech's curriculum is "like drinking from a firehose"; at Case "a large portion of guys are already in serious relationships with their video game consoles."
HOW SCHOOLS ARE RANKED	Sixty-four lists rank schools by academics, campus politics, demographics, extracurriculars, and quality of life (and include such subcategories as "Dorms Like Palaces" and "Reefer Madness").	There's no explicit ranking, but descriptions tend to fall into one of two categories: left-leaning or just right.	In addition to the multi-tiered caste system that ranks every school, <i>U.S. News</i> provides more than 150 category-specific rankings: "best value" southern universities, top schools for undergraduate aerospace-engineering, etc.	The editors create "Insider's Top-Ten Lists," such as "Schools That Attract Famous Students" and "Schools With the Rowdiest Parties."
WHO DOES THE RANKING	A panel of "50 independent educational consultants from throughout the nation" helps pick the best schools; the rankings by category are compiled from anonymous student surveys.	A staff of researchers, consultants, and contributing editors do the ranking; alums and ISI staffers write the essays on individual schools.	Schools report fifteen "indicators of academic quality"—a combination of hard data (retention rate, money spent on faculty, etc.) and a survey in which administrators grade their competitors.	The staff of the <i>Yale Daily News</i> chats up more than a hundred "friends [and] friends of friends" and randomly selected students at the profiled schools each year.
MOST HELPFUL FOR ...	... students who want expert opinion and insider gossip.	... intellectually minded members of the vast right-wing conspiracy.	... status-hungry meritocrats.	... applicants who put a premium on student life (and are willing to trust Yalies).
BEST FEATURE	COMPREHENSIVENESS. The two-page descriptions provide a quick but complete introduction to each school; the format makes side-by-side comparisons a snap.	OBSESSIVE DETAIL. Conservatives who want the full dossier on a college will be able to find out how it weathered every battle in the culture wars.	HARD DATA. Though <i>U.S. News</i> -bashing has become a beloved higher-education pastime, the magazine can't be beat for objective data about how schools stack up.	STRAIGHT TALK. The guide feels as intimate as a late-night chat in a dorm room, and even offers a glossary of terms such as "beer goggles" and "townie."
WORST FEATURE	A BIT DRAB? The grayish paper could use an upgrade, but that's a quibble. This guide doesn't lack much in the way of charm, ease of use, or informativeness.	MISLEADING COVER. Though conservative to its core, the guide doesn't telegraph its politics. A warning label might be in order for unwary liberals.	REDUCTIVENESS. Though the guide satisfies the "best of" fetish, it offers only numbers, not the details that actually determine how happy a student will be.	HE SAID, SHE SAID. The heavily anecdotal style sometimes leads to a <i>Rashomon</i> problem: the entries can be inconsistent and overly influenced by individual students' pet peeves.





50 Best Colleges for African Americans 2004

Black Enterprise magazine

The *U.S. News* of the black bourgeoisie. This guide essentially retools the leading formula from an African-American angle, adding how-to articles on succeeding at college and landing a corporate job.

JUST THE FACTS. The amount of information is paltry: a school's ranking for the past two years plus the data behind it. (Students who want a fleshed-out view should track down the out-of-print *DayStar Guide to Colleges for African American Students* [2000], written by the researcher behind this guide.)

The guide considers "large or well-known" schools and those with an African-American enrollment of at least three percent (sorry, Colby) and ranks them based on academics, social life, and the number of black students who enroll and graduate.

The *DayStar* ranking is based on black enrollment and graduation rates, and survey results from 1,855 black administrators rating the quality of academic and social life for blacks at each school.

... upwardly mobile African-Americans.

TIGHT FOCUS. No other guide assembles comprehensive measures of how well colleges integrate and educate black students.

ONE-TRICK PONY. Those looking for a more detailed picture of the different schools will be disappointed, and the advice is strictly for corporate climbers ("You don't want to become a social butterfly to the detriment of your schoolwork").



Gay Guide to Colleges 2004

Out magazine

Queer eye for the gay teen. With flamboyance and wit, *Out* cuts straight to what matters most (musical theater and beefcake).

DIRTY MINDS. The editors never met a double entendre they didn't like. (The entry for Yale—"Best Campus for Rich and Powerful Gays"—begins, "Whether you're into ego-stroking your ivory tower or cockily hobnobbing with WASPs in dominant positions ...")

Editors pick a top school for each of fourteen categories, from "Hottest Gay Students" (UC Berkeley) to "Campus With the Most Future Fashion Dictators" (Parsons School of Design).

A reporter on the college beat gets the inside scoop on gay campus life. The ranking methods behind, say, "Largest Gay Endowment" are, unsurprisingly, somewhat unscientific.

... Priscilla, Queen of the Desert.

SENSE OF HUMOR. For the frazzled, *Out* is a nice antidote to application anxiety. The list of "Sixteen Sweet, Sweet (Real) Gay-Sounding College Mascots" is worth the cover price alone.

SHALLOWNESS. This guide's bitchy charm is also its tragic flaw. Gay students curious about how they will fare in day-to-day life on campus will probably want to look elsewhere.

As a rankings holdout Reed is free to appoint talented young teacher-scholars, even if they are still completing their dissertations, without worrying about impairing the college's "proportion of professors with the highest degree in their fields" (a significant component of the *U.S. News* "faculty resources" index). We are also free to set academic policy without worrying about optimizing a "class size" ranking. (*U.S. News* gives positive weight to the percentage of classes with fewer than twenty students, and negative weight to the percentage with more than fifty.) Reed's average class size is, to be sure, very small (just below fourteen), reflecting agreement with the educational philosophy implicit in the *U.S. News* formula. But unlike many of our rankings-sensitive peers, we feel no pressure to use part-time adjunct faculty or teaching assistants as an inexpensive but educationally dubious technique for even further increasing the percentage of small classes. Conversely, we can embrace the educational benefits of combining large lectures with small laboratory sessions in some disciplines.

What lesson can be derived from the fact that Reed continues to thrive despite its refusal to cooperate with the *U.S. News* rankings? Some of my peers speculate that Reed's success has little application to their schools. Only a college as iconoclastic and distinctive as Reed, they argue, could pursue such a strategy and survive. I disagree. To me, our success says something important about the market for higher education as well as about Reed College. Participants in the higher-education marketplace are still looking primarily for academic integrity and quality, not the superficial prestige conferred by commercial rankings. They understand that higher education is not a mass-produced commodity but an artisan-produced, interactive, and individually tailored service of remarkable complexity. Trying to rank institutions of higher education is a little like trying to rank religions or philosophies. The entire enterprise is flawed, not only in detail but also in conception. This is not to say that schools should not be held accountable. Like its peers, Reed submits reams of data to the National Center for Education Statistics, to our accrediting agency, and to a consortium of commercial college guidebooks. The college publishes large amounts of information and descriptive material in its literature and on its Web site. Most important, it articulates its academic requirements in exquisite detail, and focuses on those measures of institutional performance that are most germane to its mission. At Reed these measures include the quality of senior theses, the amount of student research activity, the percent of graduates earning Ph.D.s, and the number of competitive prizes and awards received by students and graduates.

Before I came to Reed, I thought I understood two things about college rankings: that they were terrible, and that they were irresistible. I have since learned that I was wrong about one of them. ▀

Colin Diver is the president of Reed College.

—CHANNING JOSEPH and CATHERINE PAYNE

What Does College Teach?

It's time to put an end to "faith-based" acceptance of higher education's quality

BY RICHARD H. HERSH

“What makes your college worth \$35,000 a year?” It’s a hard question for a college president to answer, especially because it’s usually raised at gatherings for prospective students and their anxious, checkbook-conscious parents. But it also provides an opportunity to cast one’s school in a favorable light—to wax eloquent about admissions selectivity, high graduation rates, small classes, and alumni satisfaction.

The harder question, though, comes when someone interrupts this smooth litany: “But what evidence is there that kids *learn* more at your school?” And as I fumble for a response, the parent presses on: “Are you saying that quality is really mostly a matter of faith?”

The only answer is a regretful yes. Estimates of college quality are essentially “faith-based,” insofar as we have little direct evidence of how any given school contributes to students’ learning.

This flies in the face of what most people believe about college, and understandably so. After all, if we don’t know what makes a school good or bad, then the anxiety-driven college-application process is a terrible waste, the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings are a sham, and all the money lavished on vast library holdings, expensive computer labs, wireless classrooms, and famous faculty members is going for naught. And what about SAT scores, graduation rates, class sizes, faculty salaries, and alumni giving? Surely, a college-obsessed parent might object, such variables make *some* difference.

Perhaps they do—but if so, we haven’t found a way to measure it. In *How College Affects Students*, a landmark review of thirty years of research on college learning, Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini found that simply going to college, any college, makes a major difference in a young person’s psychological development: students come away with improved cognitive skills, greater verbal and quantitative competence, and different political, social, and religious attitudes and values. But although the researchers found wide variations in learning within each college or university, they were unable to uncover significant differences between colleges once the quality of the entering students was taken into account.

So it’s not just a perverse status-consciousness that makes higher education the only industry in which competitors are rated on the caliber of their customers rather than on their product—or that drives *U.S. News & World Report* to rank colleges on how well they recruit and graduate already successful high schoolers. It’s that we have no

other discriminating way to measure collegiate quality.

It’s possible that this situation reflects a real absence of variation—that there really isn’t much difference between, say, an Ivy League education and four years at a middling private or state school. According to this explanation, faculty members across the country tend to graduate from a relatively small number of doctoral programs, use comparable textbooks, construct similar curricula, hold fairly low expectations for student achievement (particularly in an age of grade inflation), and labor under a system that rewards research over teaching. In this homogenized landscape the quality of entering students is the only thing that matters: “Diamonds in, diamonds out; garbage in, garbage out.”

A second, more persuasive explanation, however, holds that current assessment measures simply can’t pick up the differences in learning from one campus to another. And robust measurements don’t exist in part because colleges don’t want them—because developing and testing them would be expensive; because faculty members would disagree on what to measure; and because they’re wary of anything that calls into question the long-running perception of American higher education as “world class.”

But in an era when the importance of a college diploma is increasing while public support for universities is diminishing, such assessment is desperately needed. The real question is who will control it. Legislators are prepared to force the issue: Congress raised the question of quality during its recent hearings on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act; all regional accrediting agencies and more than forty states now require evidence of student learning from their colleges and universities; and pressure is rising to extend a No Child Left Behind-style testing regime to higher education.

To date academe has offered little in response, apart from resistance in the name of intellectual freedom and faculty autonomy. These are legitimate professional prerogatives; but unless the academy is willing to assess learning in more rigorous ways, the cry for enforced accountability will become louder, and government intervention will become more likely.

Current measures of college quality fall into four major categories, outlined a few years ago by my colleague Marc Chun: actuarial data, expert ratings, student/alumni surveys, and the direct assessment of student performance. While each of these has its uses, none

is anywhere close to being a legitimate measure of how much students learn over their college careers. Like the drunk who looks for his keys under the streetlamp because the light is better there, Chun has argued, colleges rely on these measures because they are inexpensive and readily available, not because they actually tell us much.

Actuarial data and expert ratings are familiar to anyone who has spent an afternoon leafing through the *U.S. News* rankings. The former consist of quantifiable information such as graduation rates; data on racial diversity, admissions selectivity, and research funding; student-teacher ratios; and SAT and ACT scores. These statistics are easy to gather, and have long been assumed to reflect institutional quality. But there is little evidence that the attributes they measure have a decisive impact on student learning.

Equally easy to compile are surveys of institutional quality, in which faculty members and administrators across the country are asked to rate their competitors, typically on a five-point scale. These surveys are interesting if not taken too seriously, but the participants may not know enough about other institutions to make such judgments, and the variables they find most noteworthy may not be the ones that are actually important.

More promising are the surveys that ask students and recent graduates to assess their experiences. One of the most prominent and useful is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, pronounced *Nessy*), launched in 1999 and currently administered by 573 colleges and universities (see "What Makes a College Good?" by Nicholas Confessore, November 2003 *Atlantic*). NSSE asks students to rate their educational experience by reporting, for instance, on the quantity and quality of contact with the faculty and on how much homework they receive. Given that previous research shows a strong correlation between such educational "engagement" and learning, NSSE scores may be a better measurement of how well schools teach than many of the statistics that find their way into college rankings. But correlation isn't causation, and surveys like this one offer at best an indirect assessment of educational quality. Their findings rarely touch on either what was learned or, more important, what ought to have been learned.

Finally there is the direct assessment of student learning that takes place constantly on college campuses, usually symbolized by grades and grade point averages. For our

purposes these are nearly useless as indicators of overall educational quality—and not only because grade inflation has rendered GPAs so suspect that some corporate recruiters ask interviewees for their SAT scores instead. Grades are a matter of individual judgment, which varies wildly from class to class and school to school; they tend to reduce learning to what can be scored in short-answer form; and an A on a final exam or a term paper tells us nothing about how well a student will retain the knowledge and tools gained in coursework or apply them in novel situations.

Nor can grades capture the cumulative effects of taking dozens of courses over a single four-year stretch. Sometimes the whole of a college education is less than the sum of its parts. Sometimes it's far greater. And in neither case does a student's GPA, whether 2.2 or 4.0, really tell us how much he or she has learned.

Just as challenging as the absence of reliable measures

is the resistance to developing them within the academy itself. Even as the initiative for comprehensive educational assessment builds outside the university, academics continue to shy away from the issue.

Their reasons are various. What is worth learning cannot be measured, some say, or becomes evident only long after the undergraduate years are over. Others claim that any kind of assessment is a threat to academic freedom and a power grab by administrators and legislators seeking to micro-manage instruction,

impose a partisan agenda, or curry favor with voters by claiming to have brought "accountability" to higher education. And the academy has observed with alarm the problems states are having with K-12 assessment.

But perhaps myopia is operating here as well. No one doubts that professors care deeply about whether students learn what is taught in *their* courses. One suspects, however, that academic turf wars have a lot to do with why *cumulative* learning is rarely measured. Academics have trouble agreeing with their colleagues in the same field on what students ought to be taught, let alone with colleagues in other disciplines. As a result, to borrow from G. K. Chesterton, measuring cumulative learning hasn't been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.

Or again, the skeptics are right that what often passes for assessment, both in higher education and in grades K-12, too often trivializes learning. But that tells us only what is, not what can or ought to be. And it's ironic that



academics so disdain the pursuit of data on the subject, given that the academy's culture of evidence is the enviable foundation for the greatest research universities in the world.

Finally, faculty members are perfectly correct to point out that a well-conceived assessment program would take considerable time, energy, and money. They are also correct that it would require a difficult rebalancing of research and teaching priorities. But perhaps such a rebalancing, with a renewed focus on undergraduate assessment and an end to the suffocating power of the research ethic, is exactly what universities need.

If assessment is to take hold in the university, however, it's crucial that the impetus for reform come from within. It's a terrible idea to have people outside the academy—whether consultants, politicians, or businessmen—telling professors how, what, and what not to teach.

Nonetheless, there are outside examples worth considering. For instance, a hardheaded assessment ethic makes a big difference in medicine, where survival rates for conditions such as colon cancer and cystic fibrosis can vary dramatically from hospital to hospital. The most successful hospitals are those that measure outcomes and give patients access to the information—which is exactly the model that higher education ought to follow.

Colleges rely on existing measures of academic quality because they are inexpensive and readily available, not because they actually tell us much about student learning.

A number of promising approaches are already moving academic “doctors” in this direction. At Carleton College, in Northfield, Minnesota, for example, faculty panels assess students’ writing using samples from different courses. The portfolios are turned in at the end of every student’s sophomore year—an ideal point for remediation. Preliminary reports suggest that the system has helped clarify the school’s expectations and standards for faculty and students, and has improved students’ writing. This kind of evaluation is of course time-consuming, and Carleton has the advantage of being a small school (1,800 students) with a low student-teacher ratio. Portfolio assessment is not limited to small colleges, however. For example, Washington State University, with 18,700 students on its Pullman campus, has developed a similar system that also incorporates a faculty-graded two-hour writing exam.

Another innovative way to assess overall student per-

formance can be found at Alverno College, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Alverno’s faculty has created an integrated liberal arts and professional-studies curriculum focused on abilities ranging from analysis and problem solving to effective citizenship and engagement with the arts. Students do not receive grades in the usual sense; instead entering students learn to assess their own course work, and also receive feedback from faculty members and from assessors in the local business and professional communities. Students keep their assignments and feedback, along with their self-evaluations, in electronic portfolios, to track their progress over time, and a faculty council monitors the quality of the assessment across majors.

Also promising is the movement toward “value-added” assessment, which attempts to measure what a particular college or university contributes to its students’ knowledge and capabilities during their four or five years.

One interesting project recently launched by the Education Trust, a nonprofit group that advocates for education reform, compares the graduation rates of close to 1,500 colleges and universities. The comparison assumes that a school is adding considerable value if it graduates more of its students than would be expected given their high school records and socioeconomic background, and adding little if it admits a bumper crop of high-achieving kids and then graduates them at a below-average clip. It’s not a perfect metric: accumulating credit hours and earning passing grades isn’t equivalent to actual learning, and a school can easily improve its graduation rate by grading more generously. But comparing graduation rates with actual learning measures should prove interesting.

Two other value-added initiatives may soon be able to provide such measures. In the fall of 2006 the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts, at Wabash College, plans to initiate a longitudinal study of 5,000 students at sixteen institutions. Researchers will use existing standardized tests along with in-depth interviews to examine the students’ development of problem-solving abilities and their inclination to learn, cultural sensitivity, leadership, and moral character. They hope their findings will help reveal which teaching conditions are most conducive to learning and whether initiatives such as study abroad, service learning, and diversity programs are effective.

At the same time, the Collegiate Learning Assessment Project (of which I am a co-director) has created two types of tests that evaluate students’ ability to articulate complex ideas, examine claims and evidence, support ideas with relevant reasons and examples, sustain a coherent discussion, and use standard written English.

The first, called a “performance task,” provides students with a mini-library of diverse documents, such as letters, memos, summaries of research reports, newspaper articles, photographs, diagrams, tables, charts, and interview notes or transcripts. Students are asked to identify the strengths

and limitations of alternative hypotheses, points of view, and courses of action. An example:

A catfish with a grotesque mutation is caught in Paradise Lake, the source for the local water supply. Local press coverage has the village buzzing. Mayor Carp has asked you and some others in your community to serve on a panel to investigate this matter. You are provided with the following documents:

- a newspaper article that contains a picture and description of the fish and the opinion of a recognized expert as to its source
- an editorial by an environmental activist
- a radio interview with a biologist who teaches at a nearby college
- a State report with the results of water testing and other investigations regarding Paradise Lake
- a map of the area
- an article about similar fish “catches” from ECO, a journal focusing on issues of clean air and safe water

Using these data sources, please prepare a memo to the chair of the panel regarding (1) your analysis of the strengths and limitations of various explanations for finding such a fish in Paradise Lake and (2) your recommendations regarding what should now be done about this situation and your reasons for these recommendations.

All the tasks demand similar skills: students must weigh, organize, and synthesize evidence from different sources; distinguish rational from emotional arguments and fact from opinion; analyze data; deal with inadequate, ambiguous, or conflicting information; spot deception and holes in the arguments of others; recognize what information is or is not relevant to the task at hand; and identify additional information that might help to resolve issues.

Each performance task is set in the context of a broad academic field, such as science and engineering, business, the social sciences, or the arts and humanities. But a student should be able to respond adequately to a task without having specialized knowledge in the particular field. Indeed, students do as well on CLA performance tasks drawn from other fields as they do on those related to their own majors.

The second test, of analytic writing, requires two essays: a forty-five-minute “Make an argument,” in which students either support or reject a position on some issue; and a thirty-minute “Break an argument,” in which they consider the validity of someone else’s reasoning.

“Make an argument” asks students to react to an opinion—for example, “There is no such thing as ‘truth’ in the media. The one true thing about information media is that they exist only to entertain.” They can address the issue from any perspective they wish, as long as they provide support for their views. “Break an argument” might present students with a passage like this:

A well-respected professional journal whose readership includes elementary school principals recently published

the results of a two-year study on childhood obesity. (Obese individuals are usually considered to be those who are 20 percent above their recommended weight for height and age.) This study sampled 50 schoolchildren, ages 5–11, from Smith Elementary School. A fast food restaurant opened near the school just before the study began. After two years, students who remained in the sample group were more likely to be overweight relative to the national average. Based on this study, the principal of Jones Elementary School decided to confront her school’s obesity problem by opposing any fast food restaurant openings near her school.

Rather than agree or disagree with the position, students must discuss how well reasoned they find the argument by considering the soundness of its logic.

Approximately 19,000 students from 134 colleges and universities participated in the CLA through May of 2005. In this academic year an additional 100 institutions and more than 30,000 students are participating. They come from a national sample of colleges, universities, and community colleges—private and public, large and small, more selective and less selective. Results are being aggregated at the institutional level, to permit comparisons across institutions and to determine how well individual schools are doing.

The findings to date are illuminating. After controlling for admissions selectivity, the CLA shows that which school a student attends *does* make a difference. Assuming that these initial results hold up, and that learning differences can be attributed to variations in campus culture, curricula, and pedagogy, the next step will be to create case studies of the schools that achieve the best results, and conduct follow-up studies of those that make changes to improve learning outcomes. The ultimate goal is not to create a new college ranking (though some will be tempted to use our findings for that end) but to let colleges and universities share their successes the way doctors and hospitals do.

Some cautionary notes are warranted. Value-added assessment tells us only how schools are doing in relation to their competitors, not what absolute standards of excellence they should be setting. Nor should it be allowed to crowd out other measures—particularly affordability and equity—that bear on how we judge a school’s quality. Finally, there are many things we cannot yet measure accurately—and some aspects of “quality” will always remain elusive.

Nonetheless, value-added assessment offers an excellent place to start, and a chance for higher education to demonstrate that “faith-based” answers about quality are no longer acceptable. This country has always looked to higher education to take the lead in innovation, and to define, seek, and demand excellence from its students. Today’s academy should be satisfied with nothing less. ▀

Richard H. Hersh is a former president of Hobart and William Smith Colleges and Trinity College; a co-director of the Collegiate Learning Assessment Project; and the senior editor of Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk.

You Are Not Alone

College newspapers discover the sex column

BY SHEELAH KOLHATKAR

Some high-achieving students come to college with big plans: to edit the school newspaper or join the right sorority, to secure a slot at Wharton business school or a volunteer job in Africa. But a healthy number, mostly women, make their mark, and shock their parents, by starting a sex column.

Raunchy, clumsily titled, and almost universally cringe-inducing, sex columns have blossomed at universities across the country. Students at tiny Craven Community College, in the Bible Belt town of New Bern, North Carolina, briefly enjoyed "Between the Sheets"; *The Cornell Daily Sun* offered "Cornellingus"; there was "Behind Closed Doors" at William and Mary, "Love Bites" at Swarthmore, "Mouth to Mouth" at Emory. The list has grown dramatically, as if every school newspaper needs a baby pundit opining on subjects ranging from tantric sex to true love.

The dominant mode in such columns is a cheery, shock-the-bourgeoisie frankness. Plain old intercourse usually takes a back seat to Clintonian shenanigans ("On Valentine's Day, nothing says 'I love you' like oral sex," Claire Fuller wrote in Northern Arizona University's *The Lumberjack*, sparking a minor furor in Flagstaff), auto-eroticism ("I just bought my first vibrator," declared Katie Giblin—a "Biology concentrator," class of 2006—in a column in *The Harvard Independent*), or exhibitionism ("Sex is exciting, but doing it where and when you're not 'supposed to' is even more exciting. It's a small taste of porn-stardom," Dave Franzese wrote last spring in "The Wednesday Hump," which runs in UC Santa Barbara's *Daily Nexus*).

The columns vary in their level of explicitness: the Ivy League and the state of California seem to be the best places to test the limits of good taste; the writing there occasionally takes on the clammy feel of "Penthouse Forum" letters, designed to make dorky freshmen feel like they're missing out on crazy erotic adventures. Some columns are written as naughty sex chronicles; others sound like an anatomy lecture; others are milder and more relationship-oriented. But in many respects most are basically the same.

The spirited "Sex on Tuesday," in Berkeley's *Daily Californian*, is credited with being one of the first collegiate sex columns (it made its debut in 1997), and it remains, in style and substance, typical of the genre. "Sex on Tuesday" was written during the past school year by a young woman named Sari Eitches, who appears full-

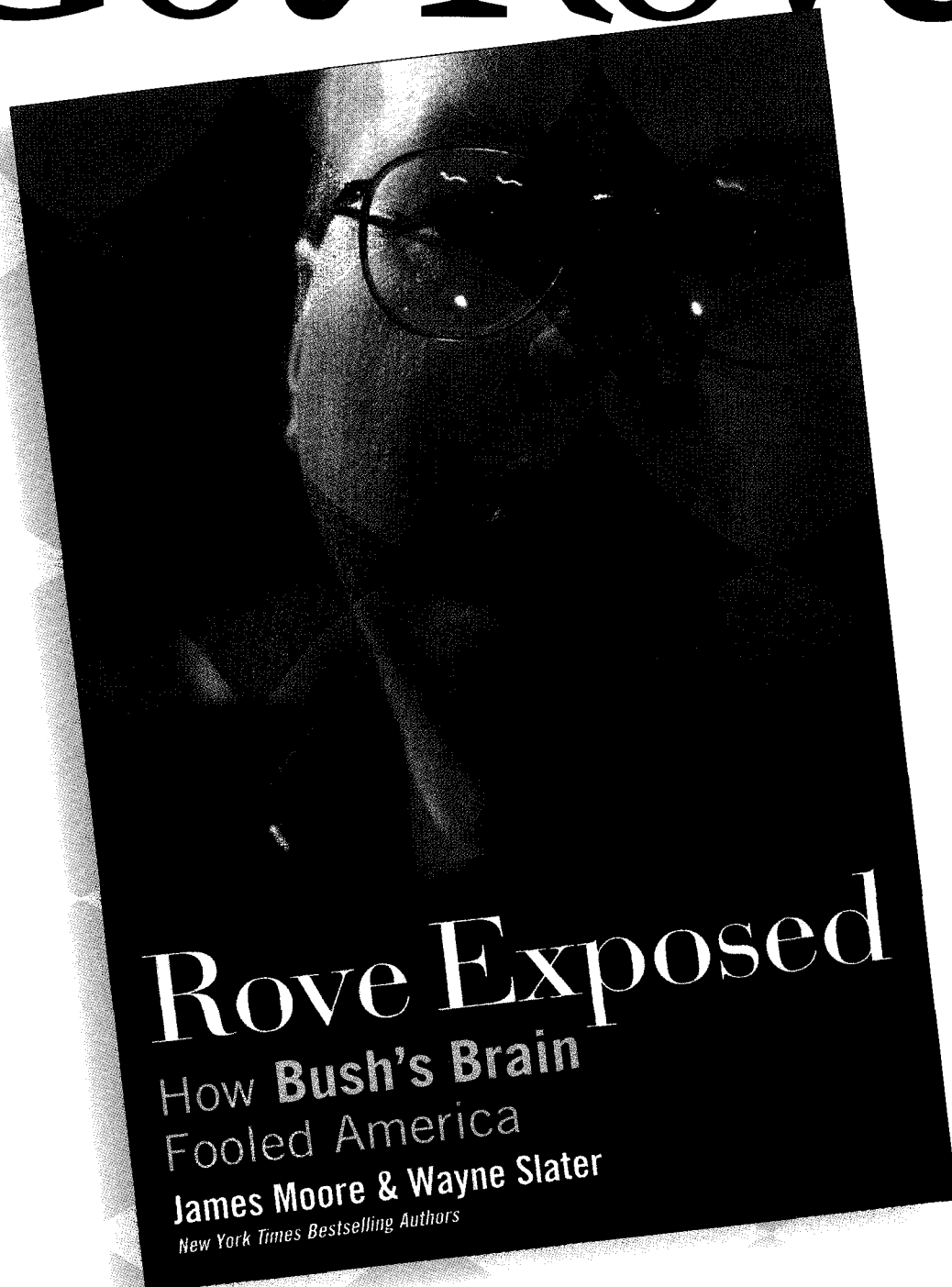
figured and saucy in her author photo. Eitches seemed fully aware of the odd responsibility that comes with dishing out sex advice to randy twenty-year-olds, and like many of her peers, she tossed an occasional bone to the more staid sexperts at the university's health service, reminding people to use condoms and otherwise do their best to avoid sexually transmitted diseases. But these hints of sexual seriousness aside, her tone was breezy and all-knowing, her prose sprinkled with innuendo and euphemism, as she chided readers not to be prudish.

Indeed, prudishness is the only unforgivable sin for a sex columnist—and as a result there's constant pressure to see how far one can go. In a column titled "Some Like It Rough," printed in March, Eitches urged her readers, "Relax your idea of what constitutes sadomasochistic tendencies," and noted, "If you include not just getting whipped by a leather-clad dominatrix while attempting auto-asphyxiation, but also giving your partner a little hickey during a make-out session, this campus is just crawling with sadistic heathens." In an earlier entry she interviewed a female porn star about her methods of stimulating her leading men. And then there was the obligatory piece championing anal sex, titled ... well, never mind.

In some ways college sex columnists are following in the footsteps of the first famous American sex-advice celebrity, the matronly Dr. Ruth Westheimer, whose radio program, *Sexually Speaking*, offered listeners wry expertise from 1980 to 1988, no matter how bizarre the query. (Westheimer also writes a column in which one typical response begins, "It is a bit shocking that, after all that has been written and said about sex, so many people remain sexually illiterate, but you are far from alone ...")

But the junior sex columnists owe a greater debt to pop-sex writers such as Dan Savage; Anka Radakovich, who had a widely read column in *Details* magazine throughout the 1990s; and especially Candace Bushnell, whose meditations on the love lives of restless Manhattanites in the *New York Observer* column "Sex and the City" inspired the television show of the same name. Like Bushnell and her alter ego, Carrie Bradshaw, most collegiate sexologists write their columns as pseudo-diaries, drawing on personal experience to educate readers. And they, too, mix a jaded attitude toward the physical act itself with a wistful yearning for true love, and even a hint of disappointment. ("It is rare for college students to have sex with people they're genuinely in love

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with," lamented Miriam Datskovsky, a "Barnard College sophomore majoring in Human Rights and French," in the *Columbia Spectator's* "Sexplorations" last April. "At the other end of the spectrum, random hook-ups allow us to have sex without intimacy.")

An important difference, though, separates Dr. Ruth and Bushnell from their undergraduate imitators: the writer of a college column usually has little experience and no special knowledge. You wouldn't know it from reading the columns, of course: they hint at a fantasy lifestyle filled with hangup-free sexual encounters, without the torment and awkwardness that usually accompany college relationships. After scanning columns from schools across the country, it's easy to come away thinking that torment and awkwardness went out with shoulder pads, and that America's college kids are busy vibrating and videotaping themselves into the stratosphere.

The constant search for fresh material to satisfy a voyeuristic audience helps explain why reading college sex columns, especially in large batches, is so wearying.

If anything, though, the opposite may be the case. Like harried alpha parents curling up with a *Sex and the City* DVD, or lonely divorcees thumbing through *Cosmopolitan*, college students seem to love nothing more than hearing about all the wild sex they might not be having. The number of sex columnists has gone up, but a 2004 survey showed little change in campus sexual activity over the previous four years. "I'm seeing more students abstaining than I did fifteen years ago," says Melinda Myers, a lecturer on human sexuality at Humboldt State University, in northern California, who wrote that school's sex column for many years. "On the other hand, they are more curious about it. They don't really want to have a lot of sex, but they want all the answers."

And that's where the columnists come in—putting up a brave front, pretending to knowledge and experience that they don't necessarily have. Natalie Krinsky, a former *Yale Daily News* columnist who made a name for herself with a much e-mailed piece about oral-sex etiquette, admits that her columns were loosely based on things she had overheard, adding that "people in college talk about sex ninety-five percent of the time" but "we always talk far more than we do, as a rule." Her column persona, too, bore at best a glancing relationship to reality. "I think that in my columns I was a lot more ballsy and sarcastic and confident than I necessarily am in real life, because I needed to be,"

she says. "You needed to be witty and poised, or at least appear that way, because you want to be relatable but you want to be credible."

Eitches had a similar experience at Berkeley. "At my school discourse about sex is very open in general," she says, "so in order for me to have something to write about, I did have to push the envelope a little bit and look for article topics that might surprise some people. I've been asked before, 'Why don't you write about an average college-student sex life, and things that pertain to that?' And I just didn't think that would be too interesting or fun to do research about. I think it was more, Oh, I'm curious to know what *that's* about." Eitches also says that she felt an obligation to address some more-obscure topics because students obviously had questions about things they'd heard or read about (she received many e-mailed queries), and didn't know whom else to ask.

The constant search for fresh material to satisfy a voyeuristic audience helps explain why reading these columns, especially in large batches, is so wearying. There are, after all, only so many ways to contort the human body; even the outlandish scenarios in the *Penthouse* letters all lead to the same short list of outcomes. In the words of one student sexpert, "You get to your fifth column and you're like, Oh, my God, how much else is there?"

So the search for novelty leads, paradoxically, to conformity. If Yale and the University of South Florida have vastly different social scenes, you wouldn't know it to read their sex columnists. While the micro-details may be different, students at both schools are revealed to be interchangeable consumers of the American university product, coping with bizarre roommates, drunken athletes, text-message flirting, rivers of alcohol. The faces change, but the sexual concerns remain the same: pornography and orgasms; the pros and cons of virginity and abstinence; sampling adult toys, "ex-sex," and sex with friends. And the columns return again and again to the oldest and most banal campus challenge: juggling a roommate and a sexual partner.

Even the columnists themselves have something fundamental in common: they're almost all women. It has been fashionable of late to suggest that documenting one's intimate life in explicit detail is somehow a realization of the feminist agenda—or at least the part of it that assumed that women were clueless in the bedroom until the sexual revolution came along. But writing as a woman about sex has become positively mainstream; it seems that there's no easier way for young women to get attention these days than by recounting their orgasms and those of their friends in either fictional or nonfictional form. (It's certainly the easiest way to attract a male readership, since men seem to prefer reading about sex when the author is a woman.) Meanwhile, established women writers with other areas of expertise complain of being called upon to discuss sex all the time.

The healthy demand for first-person sex writing can

bring notoriety to female undergraduates on campus and in the world beyond. This spring, a year after graduating, Krinsky published a chick-lit novel based on her column, titled *Chloe Does Yale*, and now she plans to write screenplays; her success has made her a model for college-age women writers everywhere, inspiring further imitators at other schools and what seems like resigned acceptance by college administrators and parents that the genre is here to stay.

Given its conventions, it was a bold move when the

student editor of the *Daily Nexus*, at UC Santa Barbara, appointed David Franzese, class of 2005, to produce the paper's sex column this past school year. For the most part Franzese demonstrated that a male columnist can be just as shallow about sex as his female counterparts. But in February he came up with one of the most radical sexual suggestions put forth all year: "That's right," he wrote, "I'm talking about having sex while you're sober for once." ■

Sheelah Kolhatkar is a reporter for The New York Observer.

FILM SCHOOL

Five movies containing lessons for the college-bound BY CHRISTOPHER ORR

Risky Business (1983). Over the years Hollywood has suggested a number of innovative ways for applicants to get into their schools of choice: make a large donation to the college (*Back to School*); pose as a minority (*Soul Man*); burn down the admissions office (*Orange County*); systematically bribe or murder those ahead of you on the waiting list (*Getting In*). But few have had the commonsense elegance of the advice offered by *Risky Business*: make your admissions officer happy. Darker and more vividly rendered than all but a handful of coming-of-age comedies before or since, the movie made Tom Cruise a star. But it is the mysterious, magnetic performance by Rebecca De Mornay that lingers.

Animal House (1978). Though movies have associated higher education with the lower pleasures going at least as far back as the Marx Brothers' *Horse Feathers* (1932), it wasn't until 1978 that director John Landis took dipsomaniacal debauchery to a new level and invented the modern college movie, for better and (mostly) worse. "Fat, drunk, and stupid is no way to go through life, son," a dean counsels one of his charges—guidance that, while sound, has been duly ignored by subsequent generations of movie collegians. A lowbrow gem, *Animal House* has in its own way been as influential as *Star Wars*: upon its release Roger Ebert called it "an end run around Hollywood's traditional notions of comedy"; now it pretty much defines them.

The Paper Chase (1973). There is perhaps no aspect of college life in which

Tinseltown has shown less interest over the years than academics. Even *The Paper Chase*, which imagines itself as having something to say about the nature of learning and the relationship between teacher and student (and which is set not in college but in the relatively sober atmosphere of law school), is more notable for the *don'ts* than for the *dos* it illustrates. To wit: Don't sleep with your professor's daughter, especially not in his own house. Don't break into the library to rifle through his old papers. And most important, don't under any circumstances loudly accuse him of being a "son of a bitch" in the middle of a lecture. (His response is unlikely to be the one John Houseman offers Timothy

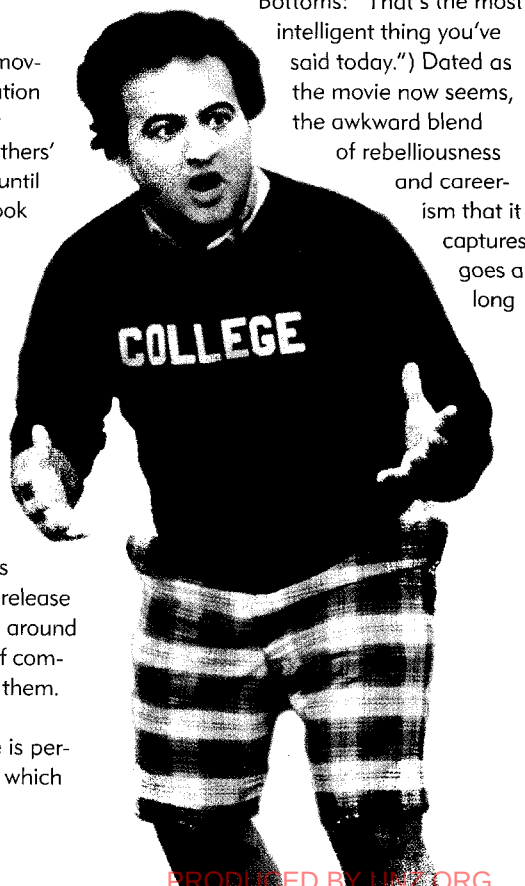
Bottoms: "That's the most intelligent thing you've said today.") Dated as the movie now seems, the awkward blend of rebelliousness and careerism that it captures goes a long

way toward explaining how the hippies of the 1960s evolved so seamlessly into the yuppies of the 1980s.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1966). When the rigors of undergraduate existence seem too much to bear, Mike Nichols's Taylor-Burton spittlefest can serve as a useful reminder that the lives of college faculty members are probably worse. Like its stars, the film did not age as gracefully as one might have hoped, and its concluding revelation now seems more hokey than heartrending. Still, it offers its share of shocks, along with a fictionalized glimpse into one of the most famous (and famously turbulent) marriages of the twentieth century.

Kicking and Screaming (1995). The transition from high school to college is often described as the most dramatic of a young person's life—and for many it is. But for others the shock of adulthood truly hits home after graduation, when sixteen years of education are over and the future is suddenly, terrifyingly, wide open. Writer-director Noah Baumbach's debut feature (not to be confused with this year's Will Ferrell soccer-dad movie of the same name) neatly captures this anxious transition, and the fear that whatever life choice you make—go to grad school? follow your girlfriend to Prague?—may turn out to be the wrong one. By turns very funny and surprisingly tender, the movie follows a group of recent graduates (played by Josh Hamilton and the woefully underutilized Christopher Eigeman, among others) who can't quite bring themselves to leave campus.

Christopher Orr writes the *Home Movies* column for The New Republic Online (www.tnr.com) and is a frequent reviewer for the New York Sun.



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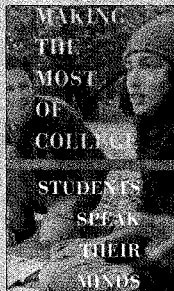
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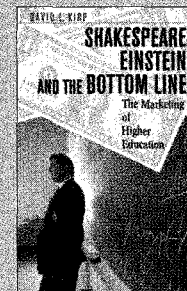
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BOOKS & CRITICS

NOVEMBER 2005 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

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by Richard J. Evans

A Time of Gifts, Between the Woods and the Water

by Patrick Leigh Fermor

Pétain

by Charles Williams

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

War Without End

What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

Still more books about World War II?! Yes, and as exasperating as this may seem, it's only appropriate that the cataclysm aptly characterized by John Keegan as "the largest single event in human history" should generate a disproportionate number of significant works. This one, the second part of a three-volume history of Nazi Germany, covers the period from the Nazi seizure of power, in 1933, to the start of the Second World War, in 1939. A wonder of synthesis and acute judgment, this work when completed will be the definitive study for at least a generation. Although repetition and an occasional diffuseness mar Evans's magnificent achievement (these flaws vitiated his first volume as well), when his game is on, as it usually is, few can rival his ability to write crisply argued history. Evans, a Cambridge historian, assesses the corrosive effects on German society of the Nazis' network of surveillance and intimidation, the extent to which the Nazis effected a social revolution, the Catholic and Confessing Churches' equivocal but nonetheless meaningful opposition to the Nazis, the degree of popular support for the regime, the usefulness and limits of viewing Nazism as a "political religion," and Germany's anti-Jewish policies in comparison with those of other states in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1930s. His final chapter, on German foreign policy from 1933 to the start of the war, is the most fluent and sound analysis I've read of that intensely debated subject. (Though he cogently argues that the Nazi state subordinated nearly every goal to the imperative of preparing for a major war, he fails to analyze military matters in detail here; presumably he'll assess these retrospectively in his final volume, on the Third Reich at war.)

With a few exceptions, such as the "Night of the Long Knives," in 1934, and Kristallnacht and the Munich crisis, in 1938, Evans's chronicle lacks dramatic events and hence narrative focus. Rather, his story is perforce one of processes. Having deftly seized power through a combination of legal means and hooliganism, crushed the opposition political parties, and abolished the trade unions, the Nazi regime in this period consolidated and extended its hold by cowing its conservative



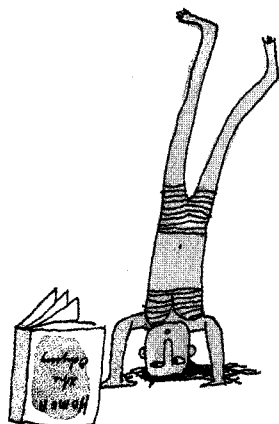
THE THIRD REICH
IN POWER

by Richard J. Evans
Penguin Press

sometime allies, regimenting big business, bringing the churches to heel, and bullying and co-opting the military. Violence allowed the Nazis to win power, but now they demolished the rule of law and built the apparatus—the Gestapo, the prison camps—that allowed them to sustain it through fear of informants and denunciation. Evans traces the means by which the regime so marginalized and demonized the Jews that the population passively accepted expulsion as the best solution to the “Jewish problem” within the Reich. And he demonstrates the ways in which it restored national pride and social, economic, and political order, undercutting the appeal of any oppositional elements—and thereby winning the nearly complete acquiescence of the German people. (Conditioned by Nazi propaganda and immersed in the regime’s ideology and world view, German youth, Evans repeatedly shows, were a good deal more than just acquiescent toward the new society the Nazis were haphazardly building.) At its best, then, Evans’s coolly precise, profoundly disquieting history gives the most thorough answer yet to the question that will nag humanity for a thousand years: What accounts for the German people’s support—at times passive, at times fervent—for the vicious and often ridiculous thugs who ruled over them for nearly twelve years?

A Time of Gifts and Between the Woods and the Water, by Patrick Leigh Fermor (NYRB Books). In December of 1933 Leigh Fermor, an openhearted, precociously learned and poised eighteen-year-old, weary of partying among the bright (no longer) young things of London’s high bohemia, decided to walk from the Hook of Holland to Constantinople. He packed the *Oxford Book of English Verse* and the first volume of the Loeb Horace in a rucksack and traveled for eighteen months through Central and East-

ern Europe as it was accommodating itself (enthusiastically, warily, or with foreboding) to a newly Nazified Germany. He encountered beer-swilling storm troopers and was befriended by Magyar swineherds, a rabbi high in a Carpathian lumber camp, and—in the remote reaches of the Great Hungarian Plain and deep in the Transylvanian forests—“overcivilized boyars up to their ears in Proust and Mallarmé,” who hosted him as he wandered from castle to castle “sipping Tokay out of cut-glass goblets” (a young man of abundant charm, Leigh Fermor seems to have possessed an absolute genius for free-loading). When the war started, he enlisted in the posh Irish Guards and spent most of 1942–1944 as an agent in German-occupied Crete, disguised as a shepherd, living in caves, where he organized the resistance and, as he offhandedly noted in his *Who’s Who* entry,



“commanded some minor guerrilla operations” that included the swashbuckling and successful kidnapping of a German general, who was whisked to Egypt. After his wartime buccaneering he became one of the most esteemed travel writers of the twentieth century. In these two volumes of extraordinary lyrical

beauty and discursive, staggering erudition, Leigh Fermor recounted his first great excursion. Written in 1977 and 1986, they were for years unbelievably and criminally out of print (thank God, again, for the unerringly discerning editors of NYRB Books). They’re partially about an older author’s encounter with his young self, but they’re mostly an evocation of a lost Mitteleuropa of wild horses and dark forests, of ancient synagogues and vivacious Jewish coffeehouses, of Hussars and Uhlans, and of high-spirited and deeply eccentric patricians with vast libraries (such as the Transylvanian count who was a famous entomologist specializing in Far Eastern moths and who spoke perfect Eng-

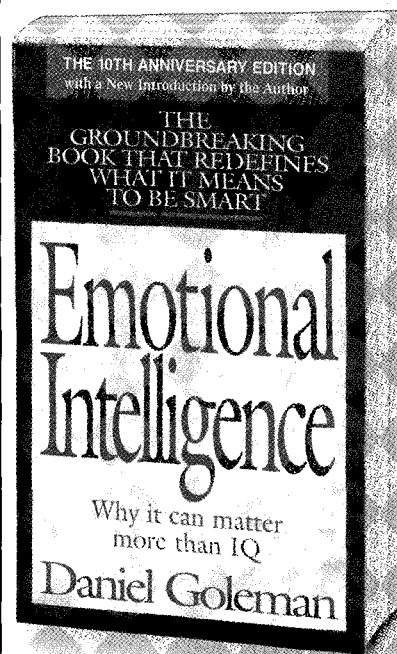
lish, though with a heavy Scottish accent, thanks to his Highland nanny). These books amply display Leigh Fermor’s keen eye and preternatural ear for languages, but what sets them apart, besides the utterly engaging persona of their narrator, is his historical imagination and intricate sense of historical linkage. (He’s one of the most allusive writers of the past century, and as Walter Bagehot pointed out, “What truly indicates excellent knowledge, is the habit of constant, sudden, and almost unconscious allusion, which implies familiarity, for it can arise from that alone.”) In a single paragraph describing the significance of the topography he saw from Ulm’s medieval cathedral’s steeple (the highest in the world), he leaps across centuries, from the Roman frontier walls below, which followed the Danube’s southern bank “all the way to the Black Sea,” to the way the same valley functioned for centuries as a funnel for barbarian invaders from Asia, to the route of Charlemagne’s mission to subdue the Avars, to the sieges of the Thirty Years’ War, to the Battle of Blenheim, to “the scarlet banner with the swastika on its white disc” that he saw fluttering below—and then he shifts to the future (the reader’s and the author’s present) and remarks that three quarters of the city below him would be destroyed in the war to come. Few writers are as alive to the persistence of the past (he’s ever alert to the historical forces that account for the shifts in custom, language, architecture, and costume that he discerns), and I’ve read none who are so sensitive to the layers of invasion that define the part of Europe he depicts here. The unusual vantage point of these books lends them great poignancy, for we and the author know what the youthful Leigh Fermor cannot: that the war will tear the scenery and shatter the buildings he evokes; that German and Soviet occupation will uproot the beguiling world of those Tolstoyan nobles; and that in fact very few of the gentle and highly cultivated people who became his friends on this marvelous and sunny journey will survive the coming catastrophe.

Pétain, by Charles Williams (Palgrave Macmillan). In 1914 Henri Philippe Pétain, an obscure and shrewd but unimaginative fifty-eight-year-old brigade commander, a serial fornicator from peasant stock who had never heard a shot fired in battle, was planning his retirement. Four years later he was a marshal of France and the most beloved French hero of the First World War, thanks to his masterly defense of Verdun—in which he displayed a deep concern for the infantrymen under his command who were enduring the bloodiest battle of the war—and to his 1917 revitalization, using an adroit combination of concessions and selective executions, of a demoralized and mutinous French army. But in May of 1940, at the age of eighty-four, he was appointed vice-premier and urged the government, in the face of France's sudden and shocking military collapse, to seek an armistice, upon which he was appointed interim chief of state at Vichy. At the end of the war a French tribunal found him guilty of treason and sentenced him to death (though De Gaulle, his old nemesis, commuted the sentence to life imprisonment). Thus today his memory evokes the great blemish on the French nation, and he is the figure indissolubly linked to an episode that still engenders shame, bitterness, recrimination, and evasion. In this work of cool authority Williams—deputy leader of the opposition in the House of Lords and the author of biographies of De Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer—places Pétain's actions and attitudes in their precise and proper context. The result will equally displease Pétain's few champions and many detractors. Williams's most important achievement is, quite rightly, to stress the hopeless military situation that confronted France on the eve of the armistice: having witnessed in the previous war with Germany carnage on a scale that Churchill could only imagine (the plucky prime minister's message to his ally in the spring of 1940 amounted to a rousing call to defend Britain to the last Frenchman), Pétain correctly concluded that French military defeat was unavoidable and that continued resistance

to the blitzkrieg would only lead to the unnecessary slaughter of more French soldiers. In adeptly recounting the tense atmosphere at the close of the Battle of France, Williams accomplishes one of the most difficult of the historian's tasks: he strips away what we know now in order to reveal what his subjects knew then. Those who castigate Pétain for his willingness to give up the struggle—for the sake of what he rather mystically termed “the continued existence of eternal France”—should recognize that the issue he confronted is the most difficult one imaginable for people in power to face (indeed, it's one with which no U.S. statesman has ever been forced to struggle), and that the “right” stance, even the heroic one, is highly contextual. But as understandable as Pétain's defeatism was, Williams makes plain that a visceral anti-communism, rather than a realistic appreciation of Hitler's intentions, determined his sanguine vision of a Nazi-dominated Western Europe and of France's place in it—and, far more important, that the actions Pétain instigated or acceded to or was complicit in while ruling in Vichy must be judged as at best nasty and at worst murderous. Among other outrages, his government banned Jews from public-sector jobs and, under German diktat, expelled foreign Jews to the death camps. (Pétain protested, but his objections “were neither particularly strong nor particularly principled.”) Still, as loathsome as these policies were, none were included in the indictments laid against Pétain. After all, hundreds of officials and ordinary citizens collaborated with the Nazis in their wars against the resistance and the Jews—and many did so far more enthusiastically than Pétain. The marshal was probably guilty (to a greater or lesser degree) of many offenses, but the one crime of which he was innocent, Williams flatly avers, was that of which he was found guilty: treason. The hypocritical and selective nature of Pétain's trial is entirely consistent with France's treatment of its dark years from 1940 to 1944—a period marked by some villains and few heroes, but defined primarily by the ever shifting lines between

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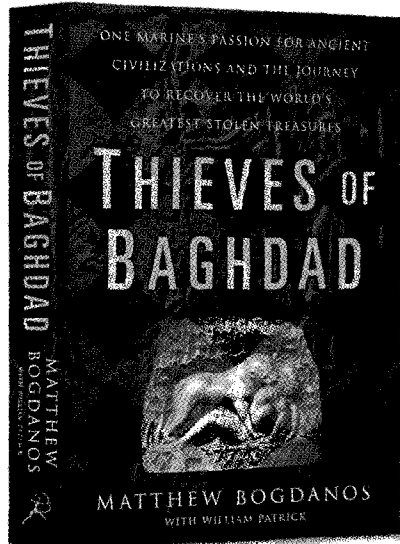
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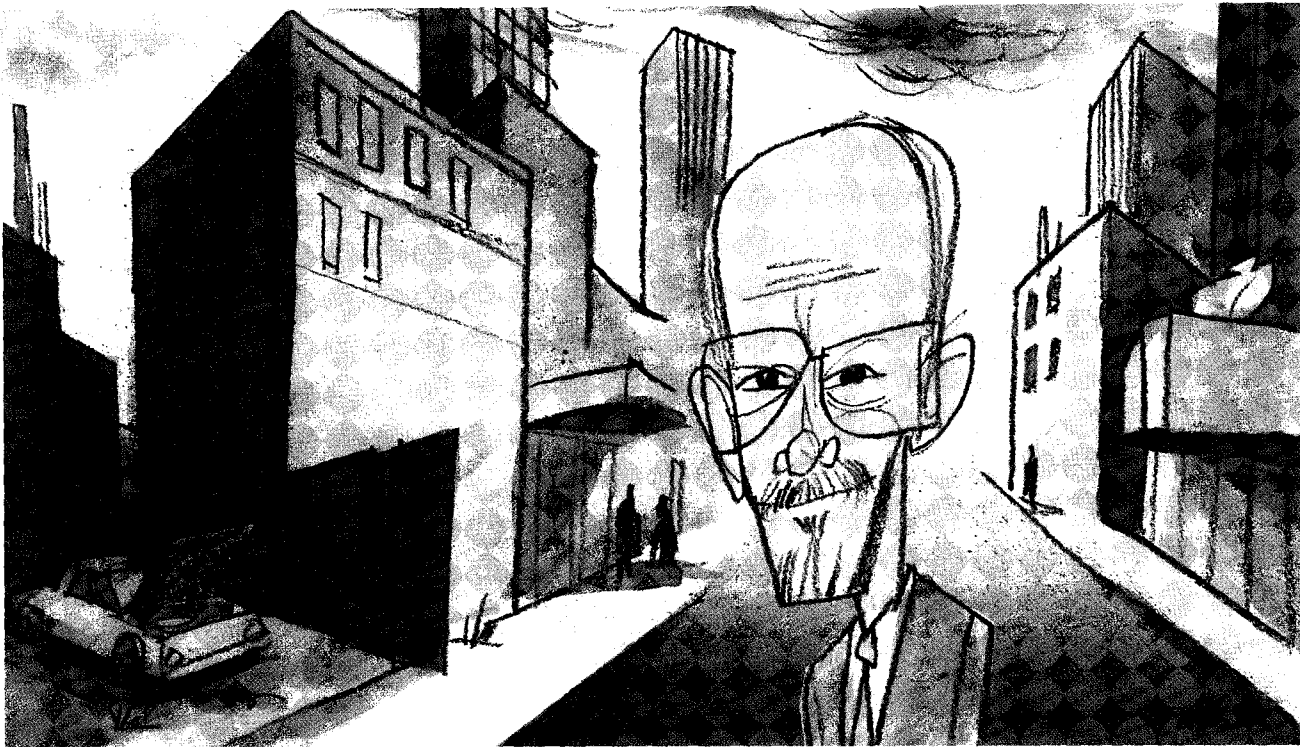
accommodation and defiance, cynicism and loyalty, and prudence and altruism through which the French negotiated their ordeal.

In Command of History, by David Reynolds (Random House). In a debate Churchill famously said to his opponent, "History will say that the right honorable gentleman was wrong in this matter. I know it will, because I shall write the history." For his entire adult life Churchill was obsessed with imposing his version of the past on posterity, and by far his most ambitious and successful such effort was his nearly two-million-word chronicle *The Second World War*—a work whose red-and-black spines were a fixture in the dens of this republic for two generations. Although those spines often went uncracked, Churchill's interpretation of the war dominates the popular imagination even today, more than fifty years after the completion of the six-volume opus. Reynolds, a Cambridge historian, superbly disentangles the complex publication history of the work (it was, as they now say, a global "publishing event," netting its author as much as \$50 million in today's money, largely tax free, thanks to his wily lawyers); unravels the elaborate series of constraints and purposes that shaped each volume's contents; and traces how and by whom each was written and researched. (Churchill directed a team of historians and officials who drafted and wrote much of the books themselves, and who even learned to mimic the master's Gibbonesque sonorities.) Most important, Reynolds carefully and engagingly separates what actually happened in 1939–1945 from Churchill's version of those events. Although he's no crude debunker, he dryly demonstrates that those six volumes are a tissue of embellishments, distortions, and exaggerations. Churchill assiduously selected and artfully edited documents to put himself in the best light; he manipulated his chronicle in deference to political and diplomatic allies, to enhance his domestic political position and to maintain state secrets (most significantly the Ultra

intercepts); he distanced himself from or glossed over disasters in which he played an important part (the Dieppe raid, the rout on Crete, the area bombing campaign against Germany, the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*) and asserted paternity over triumphs (Operation Overlord, say) in which his role was secondary. Written in the direst period of the Western-Soviet confrontation, the work almost completely ignored the Eastern Front, indisputably the decisive theater of the war; this was perhaps the volumes' most substantial twisting of history. But by Churchill's standards all this is of no matter, as Reynolds acknowledges. Edward R. Murrow, after all, in a 1951 review in this magazine of the fourth volume of the history, appreciated that "later historians who have access to full documentation may amend or reverse his conclusions," but they can't revise the past that he imperishably defined.

Reynolds's work shares the most recent Wolfson Prize, Britain's most prestigious history-book award, with another title about the Second World War, **Forgotten Armies**, by Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper (Harvard), a panoramic chronicle of the war in South Asia ranging from swank pre-war Singapore to famine-ravaged Bengal, where three million people died in 1943–1944. The endeavors of the armies in its title encompass the scurrying of British troops down the Malay Peninsula as they fled the Japanese advance; the glamorous exploits of the Special Operations Executive and of Orde Wingate's Chindits deep behind enemy lines; the efforts of thousands of Indian workers to extend the strategic road from the high passes of Assam into Burma; the labors of British and Australian POWs to build the bridge over the River Kwai; the machinations of the Japanese-sponsored Indian National Army; and the vicious internal intrigues of the Malayan Communist guerrillas. I reviewed this book elsewhere, so suffice it to say here that this is a brilliant marriage of social and military history and a work of extraordinary literary merit. ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and the national editor of The Atlantic.



BOOKS

The Prisoner of Cool

Elmore Leonard's talents have increasingly become cooped up in his hallmark tough-guy aesthetic

BY B. R. MYERS

"A man can be in two different places," Elmore Leonard once wrote, "and he will be two different men." Leonard's own work suggests that the same can be said of a man writing in two different genres. Long before *The Washington Post* described him as "crime fiction's greatest living practitioner," he was writing novels about the old West, and in that genre he was a different man—addressing the reader directly, getting into his characters' heads, and engaging in other things he now dismisses as "hooptedoodle." Back then he was still immune to the silly idea that it's unrealistic to pit a very good person against a very bad one, so even in a short novel like *Hombre* (1961) the conflict seems thrillingly epic in scope. Without taking themselves seriously these are serious books, and one feels that what happens to the characters is important.



But by the mid-1960s the western was on its way out. Deciding to try something new, Leonard wrote a novel set in contemporary Michigan. *The Big Bounce* (1969) starts in a courthouse basement, where officials are watching footage of a laborer beating his supervisor with a baseball bat. Pausing the film at the final, jaw-breaking blow, one official reads out the victim's account.

"I reminded him that servicing the bus was part of his job, but he told me ... to do the unprintable thing. One reason—"

"Excuse me," Mr. Majestyk said. "Larry, are those the words the guy used?"

The sheriff's officer hesitated. "They're, you know, writing words, the way you write it in a report."

"What'd Ryan tell him?"

"To go bag his ass."

"What's unprintable about that?"

"Walter—" The assistant prosecutor

was looking at Mr. Majestyk, marking his place with the tip of his ballpoint pen.

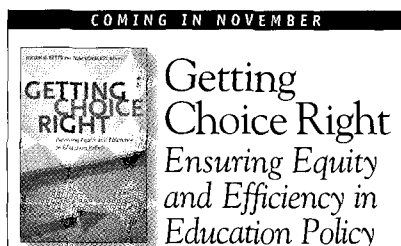
A little later Majestyk is asked what he thinks. Looking at the screen, he answers, "I think he's got a level swing, but maybe he pulls too much."

This could not be further from the western Leonard. There are no good and bad guys here, only the cool, who cut through the crap either verbally or with a baseball bat, and the uncool, who use "writing words" and mark their places prissily with ballpoint pens. Where the writer's earlier work conveyed all the horror of violence—"About two o'clock in the afternoon the Favor woman started screaming" (*Hombre*)—we see an assault here only as a faded image on film. No writer can take violence seriously and joke about it at the same time, but it is significant that for the new Leonard the joke came first. At last he was in tune with the postmodern times.

The Big Bounce sold for six figures, and although Leonard wrote a few more westerns—he published *Valdez Is Coming*, his best novel of all, in 1970—he soon settled into stories with under-world themes. Ever since *Glitz* (1985) became a big best seller, his fame has grown steadily. *Get Shorty* (1990) and many of his other novels have been

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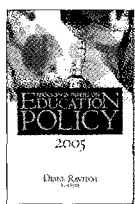
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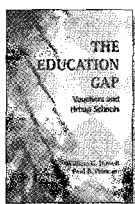
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made into movies. He is now to America what Dick Francis is to Britain: an intellectually respectable source of light, manly reads. While Cindy Sheehan was demonstrating outside George W. Bush's Texas ranch, the president made a point of telling the press he was unwinding with a Leonard book. As if that weren't reason enough to be wary, critics call him "laugh-out-loud funny," one of those blurb phrases that every sensible book buyer knows from experience to mean *You will hate this*. In truth the baseball-bat joke above is a fair example of the humor in evidence, which I might as well confess does nothing for me. And yet fans regard Leonard not as a comic novelist but as a crime writer who is great because he is funny. In the front matter of a recent novel a Denver newspaper is quoted elliptically as saying, "Grade A ... Comic characters and hilarious scenes ... Leonard puts most of today's crime writers to shame." The *Detroit News* raves, "Nobody ... can match his ability to serve up violence so light-handedly." I couldn't agree more, the average serial-killer tale being less hilarious than today's reader has a right to expect. But humor is relaxing. When it comes to suspense I know plenty of crime writers—I know plenty of Brontë sisters—who can knock Leonard into a cocked hat.

In most of his novels the cool are to be chuckled with and rooted for, the less cool to be chuckled at and rooted against. Coolness itself is taken very seriously. For the crime-fiction Leonard, coolness is all about making things look easy, but readers may find themselves wishing he devoted more attention, as he did in his westerns, to just *what* is being made to look easy. True cool is the hero of *Hombre*, a white man raised by Apaches, leading whiny settlers through the desert without so much as a backward glance; it is not beating someone with a baseball bat, or throwing rocks through windows at a girl's bidding, as Ryan does later on in *The Big Bounce*. Speaking of girls, Leonard often invites us to marvel at how laid-back his heroes are in the presence of their tans and high "cans"; this is the coolness aspired to by teenage boys. There is also plenty of nasty bully-

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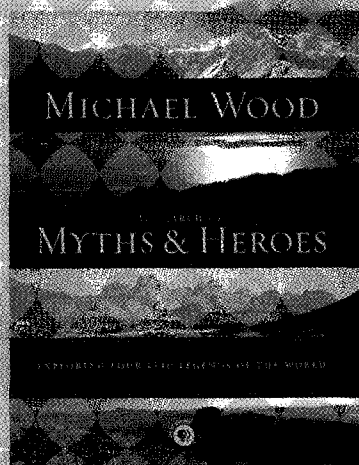
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worship; *Bandits* (1987), for example, would have us chuckle with a thuggish bartender who intimidates people into paying inflated checks.

And yet Leonard is such an original storyteller that one can find his world distasteful and still be drawn into it. Strange as it may seem, the challenge of finding a character not too unpleasant to care about, and of predicting what will bring everyone together, is a large part of what makes his opening chapters so irresistible. We seem to be watching real events develop of which the novelist himself knew nothing in advance. And just as in a B movie full of unknowns, there's no telling who will make it to the end.

Now eighty, Leonard has explained his craft as a matter of avoiding adverbs and imagery, using only the word "said" to carry dialogue, and doing everything else possible to make himself "invisible." In an age when so many writers complain about the inadequacy of verbal expression, yet for some reason refuse to take up pottery instead, it is refreshing to see someone put all his trust in lean English. The economy with which Leonard creates his characters and locales is extraordinary, and the further afield he goes, the more vivid he gets; *Pagan Babies* (2000) is worth reading for its depiction of Rwanda alone. Adverbs and metaphors are such a big part of normal speech that by avoiding them he makes himself more visible than he thinks, but the stylization is so skillful that at first the reader is only aware of being moved vigorously along. As many admirers have remarked, there are no slip-ups or false notes: everything is "planed flat," Martin Amis has said, with nothing "sticking out." Almost nothing *stands* out either, but the more one reads these days, the more one is pleased by the absence of badness. It's like watching a skater take the ice after everyone else's failed jumps and execute a perfect series of figure eights.

In recent years Leonard has begun describing his style in the imperative. "Try to leave out the part that readers tend to skip," he wrote in a famous *New York Times* article in 2001, "[like] thick

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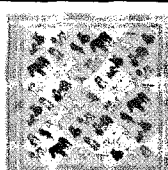
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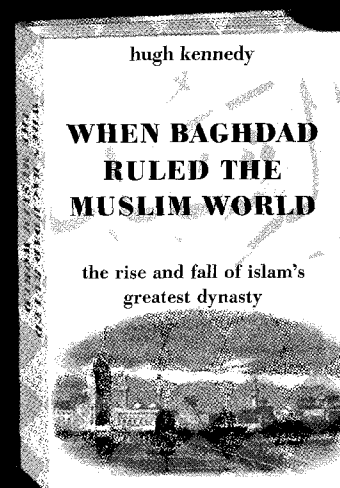


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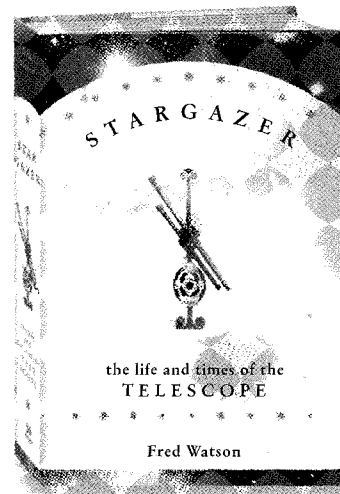
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paragraphs of prose you can see have too many words in them ... I'll bet you don't skip dialogue." Just thinking of the prigs who will squawk at this aesthetic makes one want to cheer it. A moment later one realizes that what Leonard is in effect advocating—and indeed, what he writes—are novels in which the characters spend most of the reader's time talking. Though pioneered a century ago by the English dandy Ronald Firbank, and then popularized by a man whose first name was Evelyn, the technique of letting conversation carry a story is regarded in America as the tough guy's way to write a novel, and Leonard makes no secret of his pride in it. Unfortunately, it compels him (as it did Firbank and Waugh) to stick to talkative characters. This excludes the true professionals on both sides of the law, leaving us with small-time cops and ex-cons who rarely keep quiet long enough to seem cool. They're street-smart for sure, but although the recurring interjection "The fuck'm I doing here?" certainly puts Sartre in a nutshell, no one seems to *think* about anything, at least not anything interesting.

It is the sound of his dialogue, not its content, that distinguishes Leonard from other writers. He grasps the American idiom in almost all its ethnic variations, and is strikingly good at rendering contemporary youth-speak, right down to that annoying interrogative lilt; I refuse to believe that this man wrote his first novel when Stalin was alive. But because the pleasure of reading authentic conversation wears thin fast, his better stories are the short ones—the westerns, some of the Detroit stories of the 1970s—and those in which he doesn't skimp on narrative. Here is a passage from *Cuba Libre* (1998), the best of the recent bunch.

Osma ... saw the smoke burst from the muzzle as it fired and felt himself punched in the chest so hard he took a step back, still on his feet as the dun rode him down, slammed him flat on his back to lie in the dead leaves. Now he was looking at green ones hanging over him and part of the sky, not knowing how this could have happened. He said to himself, I was ready. Wasn't I ready? I was watch-

ing ... Osma had time to think this before he saw the cowboy standing over him blocking the sky. He tasted blood in his mouth but couldn't swallow and felt it warm on his cheek. He saw the cowboy—his face with a beard he didn't have before, on the train, and a different hat—come closer to him to say in a voice he could barely hear, "This one's gonna do it, partner. Your luck's run out."

This is both thrilling and very sad. Note the Hemingway-style "and," so obtrusive in Cormac McCarthy's novels, more natural here than in Hemingway's own work. How can anyone write such wonderful prose, with a poet's sense of rhythm, and not want to write more of it? But Leonard followed *Cuba Libre* with *Tishomingo Blues* and *Mr. Paradise*, two more gabfests. It's time everyone stopped egging him on with nonsense about how his dialogue "crackles." In fact he is far too concerned with plausibility to let his characters talk more cleverly or succinctly than people do in real life.

"I stayed at the hotel. I took a room, see what it was like. You know that desk clerk Patti, blond, semi-big hair?"

"Yeah, Patti."

"She comped me."

"You dog. You seeing her?"

"She's way too young."

"And she's got that overbite," Vernice said, "we use to call buckteeth."

"She's nice though."

"She better be. You want some breakfast?"

"I've had my coffee."

"Sit down, I'll fix you some eggs ..."
(*Tishomingo Blues*)

Readers learn to recognize the words for whose savvy ring Leonard has a special affection; "comped" is one of them, and he will never let anyone just park a car when it can be "angle-parked." More to the point, one wonders whether this sort of chitchat is really authentic enough to justify its dullness. The screenwriter Richard Price has said that a Leonard line "looks great on the page, but when somebody is saying it, you feel like you have to stand up and say, 'Author! Author! Perfect ear!'" This is because the dialogue often serves no other purpose than to show off that ear. Besides, people may talk like that in real life but they don't *hear* like that;

READING LIST

THINK BIG, BE BIG

Historians whose work spanned centuries, continents, and bookshelves

BY PAUL KENNEDY

Leopold von Ranke (Prussian, 1795–1886). Ranke, the father of objective historical inquiry, wrote sixty works in all, including the multi-volume studies *History of the Popes*, *History of England*, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations*, and *History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution*. Relying almost exclusively on archival sources, he took a "just the facts" approach: "You have reckoned that history ought to judge the past and to instruct the contemporary world as to the future. The present attempt does not yield to that high office. It will merely tell how it really was."

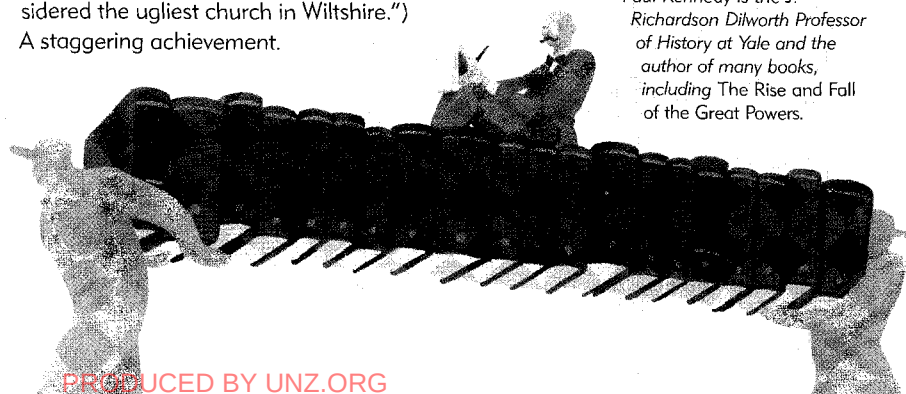
Joseph Needham (British, 1900–1995). Needham began his colossal study *Science and Civilisation in China* after returning from work in China for the Foreign Office during the Second World War. Each of the seven wrist-breaking volumes comprises multiple subvolumes, so the entire seventeen-book set occupies a fair-sized bookcase. *Civil Engineering and Nautics* (Vol. 4, Part III) still offers the best explanation of why China led the world in oceanic exploration in the fourteenth century.

Nikolaus Pevsner (German émigré to London, 1902–1983). Already an astonishingly wide-ranging author of architectural history when he left Germany, Pevsner was appalled that there was no authoritative guide to the churches, country houses, and other architectural treasures of England. With his wife, and eventually with research assistants as well, he made up for that deficit, visiting each notable (and not-so-notable) building, county by county, over the course of forty years. The result is the forty-six-volume *The Buildings of England*, which mixes technical commentary with lyrical and sometimes sardonic language. (Holy Trinity Church, in Oare, "may well be considered the ugliest church in Wiltshire.") A staggering achievement.

Arnold Toynbee (British, 1889–1975). Toynbee's twelve-volume work on the rise and fall of civilizations, *A Study of History* (various abridged versions exist for the weak-hearted), was once regarded as immensely important and prophetic, especially by many American readers during the early Cold War. It then suffered the powerful critiques of the great Dutch historian Pieter Geyl, and fell out of fashion. It remains, however, a work of remarkable erudition. All the more impressive is that Toynbee wrote it while he was serving as director of studies at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and writing the institute's annual "Survey of International Affairs." He would spend half a year composing, say, a volume on ancient Persian and Sumerian civilizations, and the other half describing the current Ethiopian crisis. Did folks like him sleep?

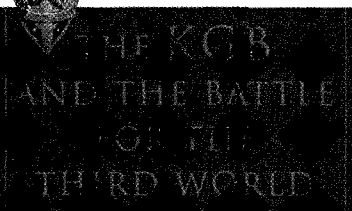
Fernand Braudel (French, 1902–1985). Braudel's largest work was the formidable (and beautifully illustrated) three-volume world history *Civilization and Capitalism*, in which he revealed a Toynbee-like capacity to discuss the port cities of Hamburg and Goa in the same sentence. But his greatest volumes are the two that make up *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, which not only looked at that richly varied region in a synoptic, comparative way but also taught us to think about different levels of history, with the seasons and the weather, relative constants, at the base level; technology and commerce, ever evolving, at the intermediate level; and high politics—reflected, say, in the Battle of Lepanto and the Spanish Armada—at the upper (though in his view somewhat superficial) level.

Paul Kennedy is the J. Richardson Dilworth Professor of History at Yale and the author of many books, including *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*.



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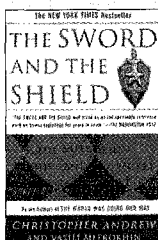
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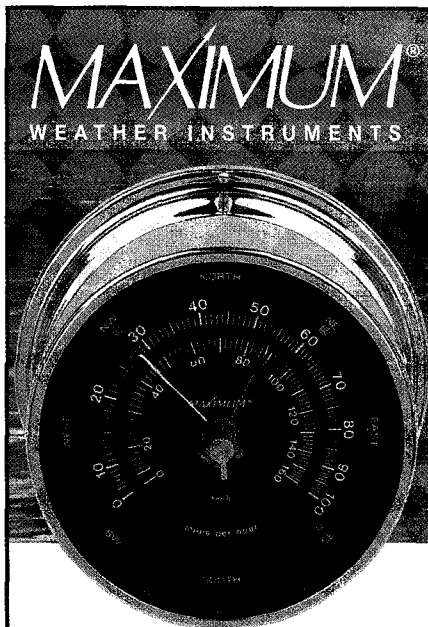
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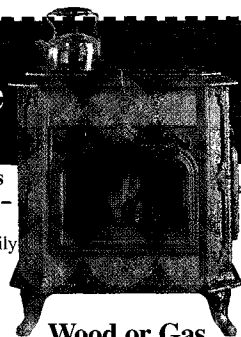
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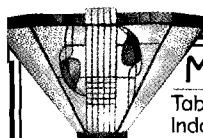
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"use to," for example, draws more attention to the aural surface of speech than anyone would normally give it. There is a reason why the best novelists worry no more about authentic dialogue than is necessary to avoid outright stiltedness.

Leonard's latest novel is *The Hot Kid*. Set in Oklahoma in the 1930s, the story follows the converging paths of Carl Webster, a young U.S. marshal determined to become a famous lawman, and Jack Belmont, who is just as determined to become public enemy No. 1. Carl is part Cuban; like the hero of *Valdez Is Coming*, he is taunted as a "greaser." It's a shame Leonard lets his attention wander to minor characters instead of fleshing out his two appealing leads. But anyone who reads the first chapter—a wonderful short story in its own right—will probably care enough about the outcome to enjoy reading on to the last fifth of the book, which is almost as good. For a change the dialogue does more than show off a knack for mimicry. There is real sexual tension in scenes between the villain and his ladies, and a touching mood of love and peace in conversations between the hero and his father. The only implausible thing about Leonard's crime novels is the flippancy with which lives are taken, and *The Hot Kid* is no exception: a man and his lover talk about inconsequential things before he pulls out a gun and shoots her, the scene ending right there as if on a punch line. No longer amusing or startling, this sort of thing only makes the story seem pallid and unreal. It is unlikely that Leonard will be taken to task for it; book reviewers show their respect for older writers by expecting less of them. (Articles have already appeared that go from an indifferent synopsis to glib flattery about who the real "hot kid" is.) But there's no forgiving the book's air of smugness. Comic effect is derived from a journalist who likes a prose style at odds with Leonard's own.

They'd pay him two cents a word to start. He leafed through one of the latest issues to read a story that opened with "Light beams, sweeping the sky like flowing yellow ribbons against

a backdrop of black, shone from the walls of the Colorado State Penitentiary one winter night in 1932."

He couldn't wait to start writing.

In *Get Shorty* the lean narrative contrasts with empty Hollywood chatter to hilarious effect. Here the joke backfires on the teller. It is as unnatural to narrate a book in purely literal language as it is to restrict oneself to it in daily speech, and after a few chapters with no imagery at all, those yellow ribbons look very pretty indeed. The reader manages the chuckle expected of him, but feels no hurry to move on.

It doesn't help that there is so little sense of time and place, despite constant reference to popular songs and fashions. Neither the Depression nor the Dust Bowl plays much of a role; the two main characters are both from wealthy backgrounds. Granted, everything ends in 1934, the year before the Sooner State tipped into utter misery, but this only raises the question why it isn't 1935. One might also ask why Leonard can't get that damned smile out of his voice even when he's describing a frightened girl with nowhere to go but a brothel. The answer lies in the tough-guy aesthetic he has spent too long cooping up his talent in: it just isn't man enough to handle any real drama.

At one point in the novel we sense what we are missing.

Joe Young picked up his gun and went around to open the cash register. Taking out bills he said to the woman, "Where you keep the whiskey money?"

She said, "In there," despair in her voice.

There is still enough of the western writer in Leonard for him not to have struck that last line, though it violates his current style in letter and spirit. We aren't supposed to notice how it jars with that famously light-handed approach to violence; nor, I suppose, are we to notice that "despair in her voice" is hardly less of an adverb than "despairingly" would have been. But there is more of 1930s Oklahoma in those four words than in all the novel's historical detail. What good is an aesthetic, if it has to be cheated into accommodating the things that count? ■

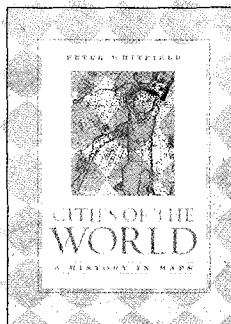
B. R. Myers is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*.

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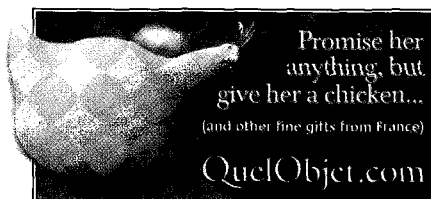
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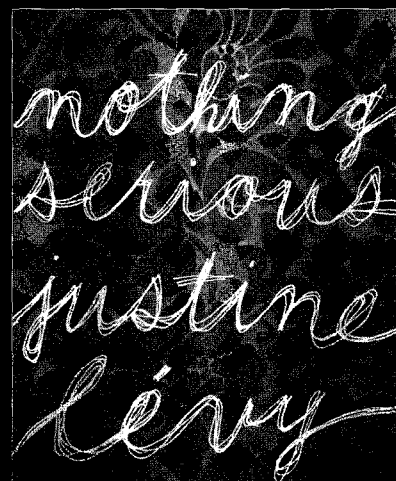
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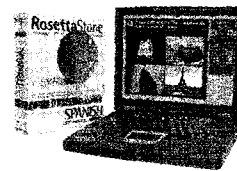
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BOOKS

Boys Will Be Boys

The latest in the ever growing field of "You go, girl!" studies

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

Peggy Drexler, Ph.D., is a renowned gender scholar at Cornell who has also held a prestigious post at Stanford. *Raising Boys Without Men* is the result of her "groundbreaking study" into "maverick moms"—lesbians and "single mothers by choice" who are raising sons. It turns out that boys raised by women without men are actually better off than boys raised by mothers and fathers. They may fuck you up, your mum and dad, but two mums can make a "head-and-heart boy" out of you.

Drexler asserts that the most important element in predicting how a child turns out is not the number or gender of his parents but their economic status. Since most maverick moms are relatively affluent and highly educated, their sons are less likely to end up in trouble—legal, educational, or emotional—than are those of the general population. This essential truth trumps almost all arguments against gay and single-by-choice parenthood. What's left are religious objections and distaste for a lifestyle, and those are hardly the basis for public policy.

No sooner, however, is the reader nodding in agreement than Drexler kicks the book into high gear: not since the SCUM Manifesto have we had such a comprehensive accounting of the low-down rottenness of men. A household with a dad in it is a place where "competition, dominance, and control" are the mainstays. Men, if roused to emotion, become like "wounded rhinos"—verbally or physically aggressive. Dads demand too much of sons, expect athletic excellence, bully them. "Not having a dad has let Henry off the hook," one lesbian mom reports; "he doesn't do well if he's pushed into things." The book is full of bad dads, from Austin Powers's crappy father (who missed a school event) to Ward Cleaver, whose

crimes are beyond number. (Most feminists consider the producers of *Leave It to Beaver* to be Burbank's answer to Leni Riefenstahl.)

Like *Guns, Smoke's* Miss Kitty, maverick moms affect a jaded familiarity with male behavior, but the little rascals succeed in shocking their delicate mothers time and again. One mother gives her son a toy hair dryer for Christmas and then is horrified when he pretends it's a gun

instead of a styling aid. Two brothers are so full of aggro that they desperately gnaw their toast into guns and start shooting. Occasionally, male problem-solving techniques give the

moms a happy surprise. One son gave a broken washing machine a hard kick (a prelude to gnawing it into a rocket launcher?) and—shazam!—the thing cut back on and has been working ever since. Like boys the world over, these ones tend to brood silently over baseball cards and ball games. Of course, nothing makes a woman go bananas like a man who won't talk, so the poor kids have to yak, yak, yak about their feelings or they'll never get to see the bottom of the ninth.

Drexler believes not that gender is a construct, layered on by the culture, but that differences between the sexes are genetic. This is entirely correct—but Drexler takes the idea a step further. She believes that because masculinity arises naturally, boys don't need an actual father on the premises to shape or inform it. In her opinion, maleness is a bit like Jiffy Pop—put the thing on the stove, give it a shake now and then to keep it from overheating, and voilà: let's eat!

RAISING BOYS
WITHOUT MEN
by Peggy Drexler, Ph.D.,
with Linden Gross
Rodale



HULTON ARCHIVE

NEW FICTION

Finds and flops

BY ELIZABETH JUDD

One bizarre outgrowth of American democracy is that snobbery afflicts all social strata equally; a suburban housewife can be more supercilious than any moneyed aristocrat. Joan Silber, whose *Ideas of Heaven* was short-listed for the National Book Award last year, rivals Sinclair Lewis in her ability to dissect the persistent one-upmanship of life on Main Street. Set in New Jersey in the 1940s and 1950s, Silber's 1980 novel *Household Words*—recently reissued after years out of print—chronicles the domestic travails of Rhoda Taber, a former French teacher who considers herself a cut above the rest. With a nervy bravado, Rhoda, married and the mother of two, lives the American dream while deriding its heartiness, its optimism, its flabbiness. "Rhoda hated all fat things. She would chide loose-fleshed old ladies: *you just let yourself go*. Of chubby schoolchildren she asked: *what does your mother feed you?*"



HOUSEHOLD WORDS

by Joan Silber

Norton

The sudden death of her husband hands Rhoda the perfect opportunity for escape, but she lacks the imagination to seize it, and thus continues to endure the machinations of her sour, impenetrable daughters (whom she finds "not enjoyable children in general") and her father's unintelligible pornographic fantasies, delivered in Yiddish. *Household Words* is a cult classic among fiction writers, perhaps because Silber rigorously examines her character's pinched and often unpleasant perspective with a near monastic purity. Rhoda's myopia permeates every corner of the novel (one family, we're told, keeps pets "in their permissive Gentile way"), and Silber never indulges in an ironic aside or the soaring lyricism John Updike permitted himself when depicting the similarly parochial Harry Angstrom. Although her refusal to compromise sometimes bears a faint whiff of castor oil, Silber achieves a frighteningly vivid portrait of smug, middle-class provincialism. *Household Words* is a virtuoso performance: meticulously crafted, unflinching, and ultimately dazzling.

Elizabeth Judd is a writer in Washington, D.C.

Raising *Boys Without Men* is as much a work of advocacy as objective research. As such, it's the latest entry in the ever growing field of "You go, girl!" studies. There is nothing a woman can do that is so fundamentally self-centered that it won't be met with a cackle of "You go, girl!" from a female somewhere on the planet. It's a way of transforming an essentially selfish act into one of liberation, and thereby protecting it from male criticism.

I've decided to stop cooking and let the kids nuke potpies for dinner.

You go, girl!

I made my husband clean the whole house.

You go, girl!

I stopped dating losers and got myself inseminated.

You go, girl—and here's a groundbreaking study to prove you're doing the little shaver a world of good!

The boys in the study pine for their fathers. Drexler notes that they share

at least you don't have to worry about head injuries.

One could logically conclude from this report that the very worst situation for a boy would be to have two fathers raise him—but I'm sure Drexler doesn't mean that. It's straight men she's afraid of, and it's been open season on them for such a long time that her preposterous book is unlikely to raise a ripple beyond its intended audience. Yet the book and its conclusions are not without consequence beyond the tightly circumscribed world she describes.

We are all building a culture together, and it is one with a remarkably consistent message. From the shady groves of our elite universities to the Hollywood offices of Interscope Records, a chorus of powerful voices is telling us that men don't need to stand by their women and children anymore. Male rappers delight in this notion because there is sexual power to be gained by impregnating many women. Feminists

According to *Raising Boys Without Men*, not having a father is a bit like not having a skateboard—kind of a bummer, but at least you don't have to worry about head injuries.

a peculiarly intense fascination with father-son athletes from the world of professional sports, and that they have an outsize interest in superheroes. Those who have ongoing relationships with their "seed daddies" mourn piteously when the men fail to take a fatherly interest in them. A humane assessment of these impulses would be that boys want fathers, but when the world does not mete them out (because of either tragedy or maternal intention), good mothers can ease the pain and do what widows and abandoned women have done throughout time: raise their sons as best they can, often with great success.

But this is "You go, girl!" territory, and no quarter can be given to any fact that might suggest the women are slighting their children. None of these boys is exhibiting "father hunger," Drexler reports; it's only natural "to long for what you don't have." Not having a father is a bit like not having a skateboard—kind of a bummer, but

like it because it allows them to enjoy the delights of being a mother without the hassles of being a wife.

The ramifications of this new attitude are going to be grave. Belittle men's responsibilities to their families, raise boys to believe that fatherhood is not a worthy aspiration, and the people who will suffer are women and children. For the past forty years women have been insisting that they be able to enjoy the same sexual freedoms as men (*You go, girl!*), and to become single mothers by choice (*ditto!*). Surprise, surprise: men have been more than happy to comply. Someday American women may realize that the great achievement of civilization wasn't Erica Jong's ziplined fuck of yesteryear. It was convincing men that they had an obligation to contain their sexual energies within marriage and to support—economically and emotionally—the children they created in that marriage. *You go, June Cleaver!* ■

Caitlin Flanagan is a staff writer at The New Yorker.

Free and Easy

Probably nothing afforded Ben Franklin as much pleasure as the applause and income he received from people who didn't know he was kidding

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

There came a time many years ago when I decided to agree to the baptism of my firstborn. It was a question of pleasing his mother's family. Nonetheless, I had to endure some teasing from Christian friends—how could the old atheist have sold out so easily? I decided to go deadpan and say, Well, I don't want his infant soul to go to hell or purgatory for want of some holy water. And it was often value for money: the faces of several believers took on a distinct look of discomfort at the literal rendition of their own supposed view.

Now turn, if you will, to the opening words of Benjamin Franklin's short essay "How to secure Houses, &c. from LIGHTNING:" "It has pleased God in his Goodness to Mankind, at length to discover to them the Means of securing their Habitations and other Buildings from Mischief by Thunder and Lightning."

Franklin proceeds to describe the apparatus of an elementary conductor. Now, you may believe if you choose that the author of that sentence was sincerely of the opinion that God had decided to deny this blessing to his mortal creation until the middle of the eighteenth century of the Christian era. Or you may decide that an excess of humility led him to downplay or omit his own seminal role in "discovering" electricity. Or you may wonder whether he was deliberately ridiculing a theistic view by setting it down so innocently, yet in such a way as to actuate a stir of unease in even the most credulous reader.

I came up with the preceding example myself, after reading Jerry Weinberger's elegant and fascinating companion to, and analysis of, the work of our cleverest Founding Father. In its title the word "unmasked" is purposely provoc-



ative and misleading, as is fitting for a book that derives from close reading and a Straussian attention to the arcane. This is not an exposé of Benjamin Franklin's *folie* in respect of the fair sex—though it doesn't suffer from lack of attention to this intriguing subject. It is an attempt to describe, rather than to remove, the disguises that he assumed in a long and sinuous life.

There are two kinds of people: those who read Franklin's celebrated *Autobiography* with a solemn expression, and those who keep laughing out loud as they go along. For centuries the book has been seriously put forward as a sort of moral manual, especially for growing boys—an ancestor of the precepts of Horatio Alger, made more lustrous by its famous provenance. But Weinberger is of the school of cackle. I deliberately postponed re-reading the *Autobiography* until I had finished his book, and then—deciding to read it in a bar in

Annapolis—was continually interrupted by people asking me to share the joke. When I pointed to the cover, I met with really rewarding looks of bemusement.

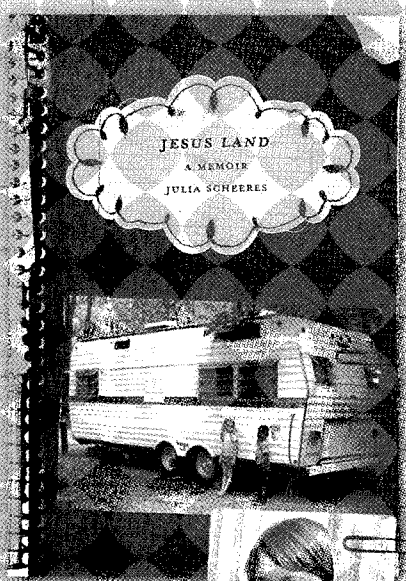
The conundrum begins quite early, when Franklin refers to his habit of disputation, as acquired from his father's "Books of Dispute about Religion." He remarks that "Persons of good Sense"

seldom fall into this habit, "except Lawyers, University Men, and Men of all Sorts that have been bred at Edinborough." This is dry, but with little or no edge to it. A few pages farther on we read of the tyranny exerted by his

brother, who wanted both to indenture him and to beat him, "Tho' He was otherwise not an ill-natur'd Man: Perhaps I was too saucy & provoking." Surely an instance of what I call moral jujitsu (of which more later), in which pretended humility can cut like a lash. We descend into vengeful farce not long after this, when we meet the case of Mr.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
UNMASKED:
On the Unity of His
Moral, Religious, and
Political Thought
by Jerry Weinberger
University of Kansas

Sinners go to: **HELL.**
 Rightchuss go to: **HEAVEN.**
 The end is near: **REPENT.**
 This here is: **JESUS LAND.**



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Keimer, Franklin's dislikable first boss in Philadelphia. Young Ben challenged this nasty Sabbatarian to keep a three-month Lenten fast, during which both would abjure all meat.

I went on pleasantly, but Poor Keimer suffer'd grievously, tir'd of the Project, long'd for the Flesh Pots of Egypt, and order'd a roast Pig; He invited me & two Women Friends to dine with him, but it being brought too soon upon table, he could not resist the Temptation, and ate it all up before we came.

This Falstaffian scene of the hapless hypocrite demolishing an entire pig demonstrates comic genius. And only a few pages before, we met Keimer as he resented the attention paid to his young apprentice by the governor, and "star'd like a Pig poison'd." The image of porcine cannibalism makes a good counterpart to Franklin's disavowal of the vegetarian idea. Seeing large fish being gutted, and noticing smaller fish inside their bellies, he felt entitled to

Franklin's multifarious writings. The first and most obvious of Weinberger's targets are those who really did take the *Autobiography* at face value. It is no surprise to find D. H. Lawrence among these, because a more humorless man probably never drew mortal breath. But it is astonishing to find Mark Twain saying in effect that the book had made life harder for his Toms and Hucks, who had to bear this additional burden of schoolmarmery and moral exhortation, imposed by those determined to "improve" them at any price.

In fairness to Twain, whose fondness for imposture and joking was renowned, he may not have scanned Franklin's early and anonymous Massachusetts journalism, in which the pen name "Silence Dogood" was an almost too obvious giveaway. To write as if in emulation of Cotton Mather's *Bonifacius*, or "Essays to Do Good," and to subvert its style and purpose so blatantly, must have repaid the tedium of many a New England Sunday. The 1747 "Speech of

There are two kinds of people: those who read Franklin's *Autobiography* with a solemn expression, and those who keep laughing out loud as they go along. Weinberger is of the school of cackle.

convince himself that there was nothing offensive in resuming his fish diet. Again, you may if you wish take this as an anecdote about nutrition, offered for the moral elevation of the young, but bear in mind the village atheist in Peter De Vries's *Slouching Towards Kalamazoo*, who could not conceive a deity that created every species as predatory and then issued a terse commandment against killing.

"Created sick, and then commanded to be well." This is one of the first, easiest, and most obvious of the satirical maxims that eventually lay waste to the illusion of faith. Franklin was well aware of this annihilating expression, which he employed in his "Dialogue Between Philocles and Horatio," written in 1730. Weinberger seizes hold of his professed and repressed attitudes to religion, and employs them as a thread of Ariadne through the labyrinth of

Miss Polly Baker," in which a common whore made a notably eloquent speech in defense of her right to bear bastard children, fooled almost everyone at the time. We may be right in speaking of an age of innocence, in which Miss Baker's apologia (she is "hard put to it" for a living, "cannot conceive" the nature of her offense, and half admits "all my Faults and Miscarriages") was received with furrowed and anxious brows. But the only wonder, once you get the trick of it, is how Franklin was able to use such broad and easy punning to lampoon the Pharisees of the day. He even tells us in the *Autobiography* how it became a *delight to him to pen anonymous screeds*, put them under the door of the newspaper office at night, and then watch the local worthies try to puzzle out their authorship. I always used to think when I saw the customary portraits of Franklin, with his spectacles and his Quakerish homespun garb and his bunlike hair,

that there was something grannyish about him. It took me years to appreciate that in youth, at least in prose, he had been quite a good female impersonator. So that's one mask off.

In his *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, which I am assuming Professor Weinberger knows almost by heart, Leo Strauss made the surprisingly unesoteric observation that the best way to avoid the wrath of the censor is to present an apparently balanced debate in which the views of the side disliked by the censor are given a "straight" denunciation. Only a little subtlety is required to make these views slightly more attractive than the censor might wish. And many are those who have been seduced, or disillusioned, in this manner, even by debates into which no conscious "twist" has been inserted. (De Vries's novel also contains a hilarious scene in which the town atheist and the town clergyman have a public argument and succeed in completely winning each other over.)

That Franklin had the necessary cast of mind for this dialectic is not to be doubted. He even tells us himself, with an open and friendly face,

Some Books against Deism fell into my Hands; they were said to be the Substance of Sermons preached at Boyle's Lectures. It happened that they wrought an Effect on me quite contrary to what was intended by them: For the Arguments of the Deists which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much Stronger than the Refutations.

But Franklin isn't done with the reader quite yet. He gives an account of a Deism in which it is quite impossible that he believed. Or is it true that he ever "from the Attributes of God, his infinite Wisdom, Goodness & Power concluded that nothing could possibly be wrong in the World, & that Vice & Virtue were empty Distinctions, no such Things existing"? Everything in his life and writing argues against this likelihood, and Weinberger wittily appends a note on how to distinguish between "dry," "wet," and "very wet" Deism. Only the ultra-dry Deists denied human beings all free will, and even then the

NEW FICTION

A CLOSE READ

What makes good writing good

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ



"Beyond the town, along the coast, I could see the pale brown frill of sand that edged the great folds of land as they knelt down into the sea.

"You can see our house," said Adam.

He pointed to the right, where the tiny grid of streets fanned out into a big red delta of new housing that had spread east from the compact center of the town like something slowly being disgorged. I followed the direction of his finger through the ranks of little boxes, each neatly summed up on a square of green. From a distance it looked like a circuitry board. I couldn't distinguish Adam's house from the others, though I wanted to: I had left Hamish there with Adam's wife, Lisa, and their baby. I hadn't intended to do this. My plans for Hamish had been vaguely incorporeal: I had imagined him following me around, unbodied, free of want, but as soon as we arrived Lisa had placed him implacably under her own jurisdiction, like an empire appropriating a small, suitable colony." —from *In the Fold*, by Rachel Cusk (Little, Brown)

Two metaphors and three similes in the space of eight sentences might easily unbalance a lesser writer's work, but though Cusk uses figurative language liberally, she does so with a light touch and an intellectual precision that makes the figures work exactly as they ought: to economically and gracefully expand the meaning of the passage well beyond its literal limits. Simile alone—"like something slowly being disgorged"—reveals the narrator's distaste for the new development in which his friend lives. Whereas Cusk compares the land itself to a woman in a skirt, she makes the housing impersonal—identical "little boxes," places where electrical impulses might come together, not human beings. (In so doing she pulls off the risky trick of using three distinct images—a delta, regurgitation, and an

electrical system—to characterize the same sight.) Her sentence structures neatly mirror her meaning: the metaphor describing the land meeting the sea, with its scallops of pretty phrases, is lyrical, but the simile that compares the development to a circuitry board is as flat as the edges of the boxes and squares to which it refers. Lisa, mistress of one of the new houses, is also, from the narrator's point of view, somewhat inhuman here; yet unlike the houses, which are less than they ought to be, she is far greater than any individual woman. "Jurisdiction," "empire," "appropriating," "colony"—her behavior, as she effortlessly takes control of the narrator's small son, inspires a raft of legal and political terms.

Christina Schwarz is the author of the novels *Drowning Ruth* and *All Is Vanity*.

idea that the world was as good as it possibly could be was dependent on the fatalistic and tautological conviction that it was, *ex hypothesi*, the only possible world in the first place. Franklin was never a Pangloss, and his bald statement of what such a belief would entail is the equal of Voltaire's.

He seems to have disclosed his true ambition only by appearing to disown or abandon it. At about the midpoint of the *Autobiography*, having already familiarized us with his suspicion of all established churches, he relates his intention, in 1731, of setting the world to rights by establishing a "Party for

Virtue." This would form the "Virtuous and good Men of all Nations" into "a regular Body, to be govern'd by suitable good and wise Rules." This apparently platitudinous project was to involve a "creed," which would comprise "the Essentials of every known Religion" while "being free of every thing that might shock the Professors of any Religion." This was as much as to say that a frontal disagreement with the godly was not to be entertained: an unsurprising proposition in that or any other epoch. The party's manifesto included some ecumenical boilerplate about one God, divine providence, and the reward

RUSSIA

A top-ten book list, as of August 2005, based on sales data compiled by Moscow's *Dom Knigi* (House of Books).

1. I Take My Words Back, by Viktor Suvorov. A Russian military historian finds flaws in the memoirs of the late Soviet World War II hero Marshal Zhukov—and takes his words back for him.

2. Confessions of an Economic Hit Man, by John Perkins. World economic institutions are purportedly shown to be as corrupt and conspiracy-ridden as Russians always believed them to be.

3. The Blue Day Book, by Bradley Trevor Greive. Animal photos and corny captions as mood enhancers, compiled by a Tasmanian author.

4. My Life, by Bill Clinton. The memoirs of Russia's favorite American president.

5. Catherine the Great: The Diamond Cinderella, by Aleksandr Bushkov. A patriotic account of a German noblewoman's rise to the Russian throne and of her rule as an enlightened despot.

6. Hunting for Werewolves, by Aleksandr Khinshtein. A Duma deputy's exposé of the gravest threat to law and order in Russia: "werewolves" (corrupt law-enforcement officers).

7. Business Is Psychology, by Marina Meliya. Self-help for the disgruntled Russian businessman.

8. Lost Civilization: In Search of Lost Mankind, by Aleksei Maslov. The "true" history of mankind, including Atlantis, our vanished horned ancestors, and mysterious giants.

9. Doctor Sinelnikov's Practical Course: How to Learn to Love Yourself, by V. Sinelnikov and S. Slobodchikov. A step-by-step course in supermarket psychology, Russian-style, for sufferers of low self-esteem.

10. The Mafia Manager: A Guide to the Corporate Machiavelli, by V. An anonymous author confirms what Russian entrepreneurs already know: business isn't about mission statements, but about who whacks whom—commercially, of course.

—JEFFREY TAYLER

of virtue and punishment of vice "either here or hereafter" (my italics), but its point of distinction lay in the clause stipulating that "the most acceptable Service of God is doing Good to Man." Having laid out this essentially humanist appeal with some care over a couple of pages, Franklin writes with diffidence that the pressure of other work led him to postpone it indefinitely. Weinberger believes, to the contrary, that he made this project his unostentatious life's work, always seeking to unite men of science and reason, and even, if rather belatedly, abandoning his pro-slavery position and becoming an advocate of emancipation. There is good evidence that he is right. Franklin's decision to become a Freemason, for instance, can be interpreted first as somewhat anticlerical and second as signifying his adherence to a common brotherhood without frontiers. And there is the usual Franklin joke: with great attention to the proprieties of frugality and thrift, he still straight-facedly suggested that the "Party for Virtue" be actually named "the Society of the *Free and Easy*."

It is precisely Franklin's homespun sampler quotations about frugality and thrift that made him rich and famous through the audience of his *Almanack*. And it was these maxims, collected and distilled in the last of the Poor Richard series and later given the grand title *The Way to Wealth*, that so incensed Mark Twain as to cause him to write that they were "full of animosity toward boys" and "worked up with a great show of originality out of truisms that had become wearisome platitudes as early as the dispersion from Babel." A point, like a joke, is a terrible thing to miss. When I re-read *The Way to Wealth* from the perspective of Jerry Weinberger, I could not bring myself to believe that it had ever been taken with the least seriousness. In the old days at *The New Statesman* we once ran a celebrated weekend competition that asked readers to submit made-up gems of cretinous bucolic wisdom. Two of the winning entries, I still recall, were "He digs deepest who deepest digs" and "An owl in a sack bothers no man." Many of Poor Richard's attempts at epigram

and aphorism do not even rise to this level. My favorite, "'Tis hard for an empty Bag to stand upright," is plainly not a case in which Franklin thinks he has polished his own renowned wit to a diamond-hard edge. The whole setting of *The Way to Wealth* is a "lift," it seems to me, from Christian's encounter with Vanity Fair in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. And the heartening injunctions (of which "The Cat in Gloves catches no Mice" is another stellar example) are so foolish that it is a shock to remember that the old standby "God helps them that help themselves" comes from the same anthology of wisdom.

Franklin's moral jujitsu, in which he always seemingly deferred to his opponents in debate but left them first punching the air and then adopting his opinions as their own, is frequently and slyly boasted about in the *Autobiography*, but it cannot have afforded him as much pleasure as the applause and income he received from people who didn't know he was kidding. The tip-offs are all there once you learn to look for them, as with Franklin's friend Osborne, who died young.

He and I had made a serious Agreement, that the one who happen'd first to die, should if possible make a friendly Visit to the other, and acquaint him how he found things in that separate State. But he never fulfill'd his Promise.

At a time when some noisy advocates are attempting to revise American history, and to represent the Founders as men who believed in a Christian nation, this book could not be more welcome. I close with what Franklin so foxily said about the Reverend Whitefield, whose oral sermons were so fine but whose habit of writing them down exposed him to fierce textual criticism: "Opinions [delivered] in Preaching might have been afterwards explain'd, or qualify'd by supposing others that might have accompany'd them; or they might have been deny'd; But *litera scripta manet*." Yes, indeed, "the written word shall remain." And the old printer left enough of it to delight subsequent generations and remind us continually of the hidden pleasures of the text. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic* and a columnist for *Vanity Fair*.

PURSUIT & RETREATS

NOVEMBER 2005 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

INNOCENT BYSTANDER

Fatwa City

Behavior modification gets down to business

BY CULLEN MURPHY

“Underwear is called underwear for a reason—because it is normally worn under your clothes.” This explanation was offered to fellow legislators earlier this year by a member of Virginia’s House of Delegates. It came amid a searing floor debate over a measure introduced by Algie T. Howell, a Democrat from Norfolk, that would levy a \$50 fine for the wearing of pants that droop, hip-hop style, allowing underwear to show. Supporters of the bill hoped that it would begin to stem the “coarsening of society.” Opponents, including the American Civil Liberties Union, argued that the fine amounted to racial profiling, because the fashion statement at issue is associated with African-American males. The House of Delegates passed the bill by a wide margin, but then, in the face of nationwide ridicule, a committee of Virginia’s senate convened a special meeting and killed it.

During most of my lifetime America has been a land where governments took little regulatory interest in the nanobehavior of everyday life. To be sure, there were plenty of so-called blue laws back in Colonial times, some of which remain on the books. (Even now local lore holds that it is technically illegal to kiss in front of a church

in the city of Boston.) There was also the failed experiment of Prohibition. And to this day that tag on mattresses cannot be torn off without risk of *peine forte et dure*. But in recent decades we have not had to live according to *fatwas* like those of Iraq’s Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who has decreed, for instance, in Fatwa 2648: “It is unworthy to drink too much water, to drink water after eating fatty food, and to drink water while standing during the night.” (Or this, Fatwa 2479: “A man cannot marry a girl who has been suckled fully by his mother or paternal grandmother.”) We have not been forced to adhere to fastidious strictures like those of Singa-

That said, and despite the failure of the “droopy drawers” bill, the tide now appears to be turning, and turning fast. My files are far from exhaustive, but they overflow with examples. In Texas a Republican lawmaker has proposed a bill that would require teenagers under eighteen to have a grade-point average of 2.0 or above in order to be issued a driver’s license. Arguing that “parents with young children should not have to explain to them what a four-hour erection is,” a Virginia congressman, Jim Moran, introduced an amendment (to H.R. 310) that would outlaw TV ads for erectile-dysfunction drugs between 6:00 A.M. and 10:00 P.M. The

state of Arkansas has now mandated that all schoolchildren be evaluated for their body-mass index, and that they receive an annual BMI “report card.” In Alabama proponents of a law forbidding the sale of sex toys are breathing easier (and opponents less heavily) after the collapse in February of a legal challenge mounted by the ACLU, which argued that the ban violated the right to privacy; the U.S. Supreme Court declined to consider the matter. In Sutter, California, students this year were issued radio identification tags in order to automate the monitoring of attendance (and, par-

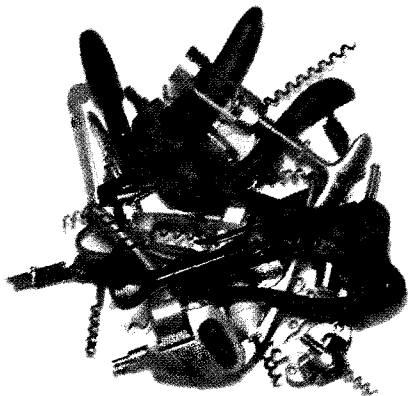
ents wondered, who knew what else?). In Hawaii legislators are considering a prohibition on smoking at public beaches and parks—the first extension by any state of smoking bans to the outdoors. Meanwhile, the same Virginia legislator who was troubled by exposed underwear has introduced legislation that would penalize drivers for play-



pore, where the offense of spitting on the sidewalk carries a \$600 fine. The ongoing “Let us trim our hair in accordance with Socialist lifestyle” campaign in North Korea has posed no imminent threat of infiltration here. If anything, the tendency in late-twentieth-century America was in exactly the opposite direction—toward moral *laissez-faire*.

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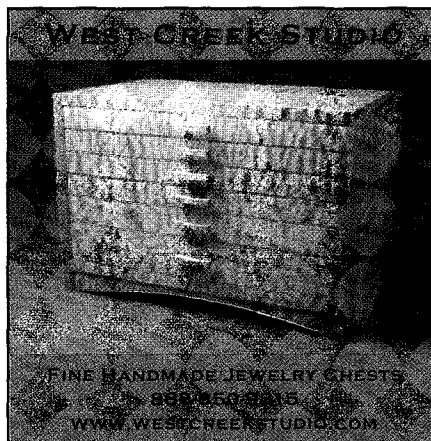
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ing music too loudly in their cars or for slouching too far back in their seats.

Language, of course, has long been a target of those who would legislate morality, and the Federal Communications Commission under Michael Powell was an increasingly stern watchdog. Earlier this year PBS distributed to its affiliates only the expurgated version of *A Company of Soldiers*, a *Frontline* documentary about American forces in Iraq, because of concerns that obscenities shouted by military personnel during an ambush might bring censure from the FCC; it released the unbleeped version only to those local stations willing to sign waivers absolving PBS of liability for any fines. In Congress, Representative Douglas Ose, a Republican from California, is pushing legislation (H.R. 3687) that would explicitly forbid certain words from being broadcast in America under any circumstances. Thirty years ago the comedian George Carlin built a routine around the seven forbidden words, the words that "curve your spine and grow hair on your hands." Congressman Ose's list is nearly the same as Carlin's, except that Ose would for some reason permit the use of "tits" but proscribe the use of "asshole." The fine-tuning of linguistic etiquette is not confined to the United States. Our British cousins, through the auspices of the *British Medical Journal*, have proposed the eradication of a dozen terms, including "911" (the easy shorthand conceals the enormity of thousands of deaths) and "kiddie porn" (it sounds too chirpy for something so terrible). The journal's editor, Richard Smith, observes, "The proposal to ban a word focuses attention on the many wrong assumptions, prejudices, and even evil thoughts that might be contained within a word."

Legislating morality takes many forms; it doesn't require actual legislation. One indication of a creeping moralism is the application of a religious gloss to activities or phenomena where previously there had been none. On the outskirts of Tampa, Florida, a developer named Bill Martin plans to open a refuge called Club Natura, a nudist camp with an overtly Christian theme, which

aims to offer an experience of the virtuous life in the Garden of Eden (and which will not tolerate any tasting of the forbidden fruit, unlike other nudist camps Martin could name). *Cosmopolitan* magazine, once a lodestar of earthly pleasuring, has hired a spirituality editor, its first, for the British edition. The editor, Hannah Borno, writes, "I've come to the painful realization that men and shoes are not enough to make me happy." Cleaning up nuclear contamination is too important to be left to the scientists: Madonna, whose interest in kabbalah is well known, was recently observed (by an undercover BBC reporter, according to the *New York Post*) trying to rid Chernobyl of excessive radiation by means of "a weird religious service, which started with prayer readings and chanting that culminated in everyone turning to the east, pushing the air with their hands, and crying out 'Cher-er-er-nobyl' at the top of their voices." Even devil worship, once widely regarded as outside the religious fold almost by definition, has received the balm of sanctification: the Royal Navy now recognizes devil worship as a religion, opening the way for a seaman named Chris Cranmer, a technician on the HMS *Cumberland*, to perform Satanist rituals aboard ship and, in the event he falls in battle, to have a Church of Satan funeral (which brings up an intriguing theological point: if killed during a conflict with the Axis of Evil, should he be denied a Satanic service?).

"We shouldn't legislate morality," the liberals say, to which a social conservative like John Ashcroft would (and does) reply, "I think *all* we should legislate is morality. We shouldn't legislate *immorality*." No one wants to get caught between the antagonists in this debate. Like most Americans, I take a libertotalitarian stance, believing that government should not legislate my morality but in certain areas could do a lot more legislating of other people's. That's not a very helpful guide to good public policy, but maybe this is: If instead of referring to legislation as H.R. 310 or H.R. 3687 we referred to Fatwa 310 or Fatwa 3687, we might instinctively know better where to draw a line. **A**

Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic's managing editor.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERHAPS, A TENABLE HISTORY OF JESUS

It won't be found in the Bible. Critical examination of the New Testament Gospels reveals sloppy history, perhaps deliberately deceptive, giving a picture of Jesus more imaginative than factual. Most Christians seem not to notice or care—transcendentalism spins its own reality. But true realists, for whom historical accuracy matters, may be pleased with what the recently discovered *Gospel of Thomas* provides: 113 notes taken down by Thomas of perplexing things Jesus said. Such notes were probably made at the times they were heard and have not suffered alteration—the best kind of source for a history.

Jack Hannah in *You Will Not Taste Death: Jesus and Epicureanism* recognizes the notes as chronologically ordered and correlative with the skeletal history used in the *Gospel of Mark*. Hannah provides all the text of *Thomas* and all Marcan context, and upon this develops a narrative about Jesus that is tenably historical.

This *historical* Jesus based his teaching on the Epicurean philosophy, e.g. in place of Judaism's practices of fasting, praying, almsgiving, and obeying food laws, this *historical* Jesus said, "Tell no lie and do not do what you hate."

This *historical* Jesus never mentioned devil, demons, or hell. And the most radical influence of Epicureanism on Jesus' thought was that God and Caesar are man-made authorities and that one's ultimate authority should be oneself. Hannah's book is 321 pgs., pbk., \$12 postpaid.

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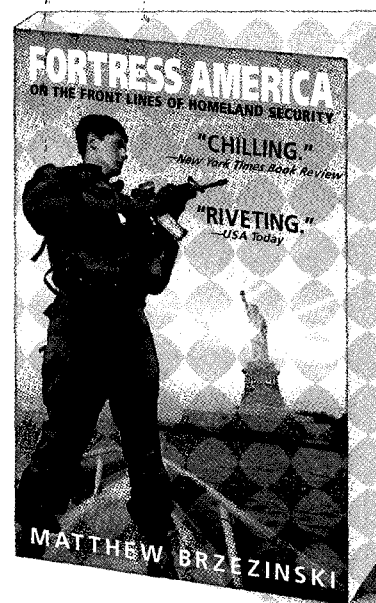
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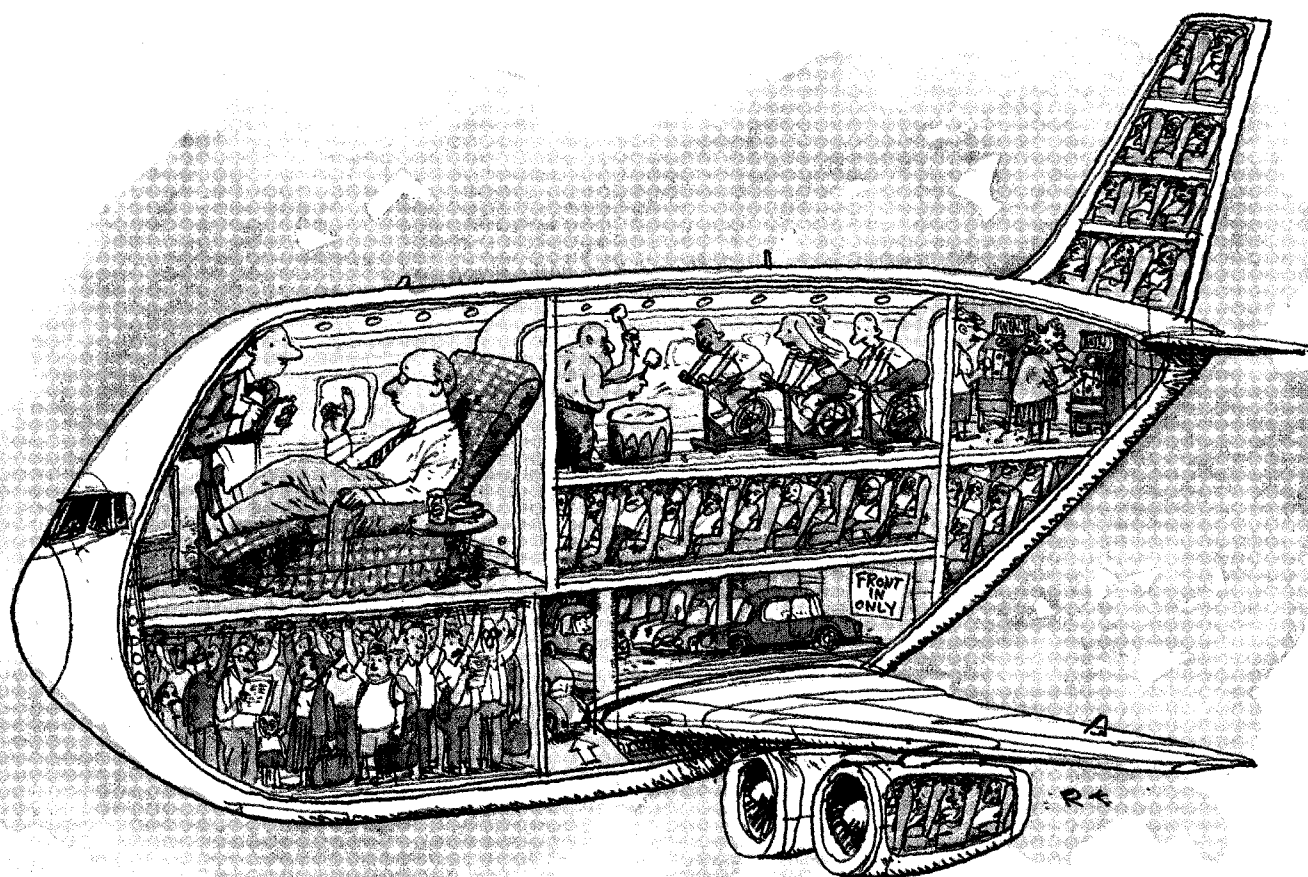
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TRAVELS

The Mother Load

"Oh, my God—Southwest to Tampa with a thousand people!" In France our correspondent gets an inside look at the new Airbus A380, the world's biggest passenger plane—and actually kind of likes what he sees

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

Sometimes it seems that the aim of modernity is to flush the romance out of life. The library, with its Daedalian labyrinth, mysterious hush, and faintly ominous aroma of knowledge, has been replaced by the computer's cheap glow, pesky chirp, and data spillage. Who born since 1960 has any notion of the Near East's exotic charms? Whence the *Rubáiyát*? Whither Scheherazade? The Thief of Baghdad is jailed, eating Doritos in his underwear. As for romance itself ... "Had we but world enough, and pills, / For erectile dysfunction's ills." And nothing is more modern than air travel.

As stimulating adventure, flying nowadays ranks somewhere between appearing in traffic court and going to

Blockbuster with the DVD of *Shrek 2* that my toddler inserted in the toaster. Thus the maiden flight, on April 27, 2005, of the Airbus A380, the world's largest airliner, did not spark the world's imagination. Or it did—with mental images of a boarding process like going from Manhattan to the Hamptons on a summer Friday, except by foot with carry-on baggage. This to get a seat more uncomfortable than an aluminum beach chair.

What a poor, dull response to a miracle of engineering. The A380 is a Lourdes apparition at the departure ramp. Consider just two of its marvels: Its takeoff weight is 1.235 million pounds. And it takes off. The A380 is the heaviest airplane ever flown—171 tons heavier than the previous record

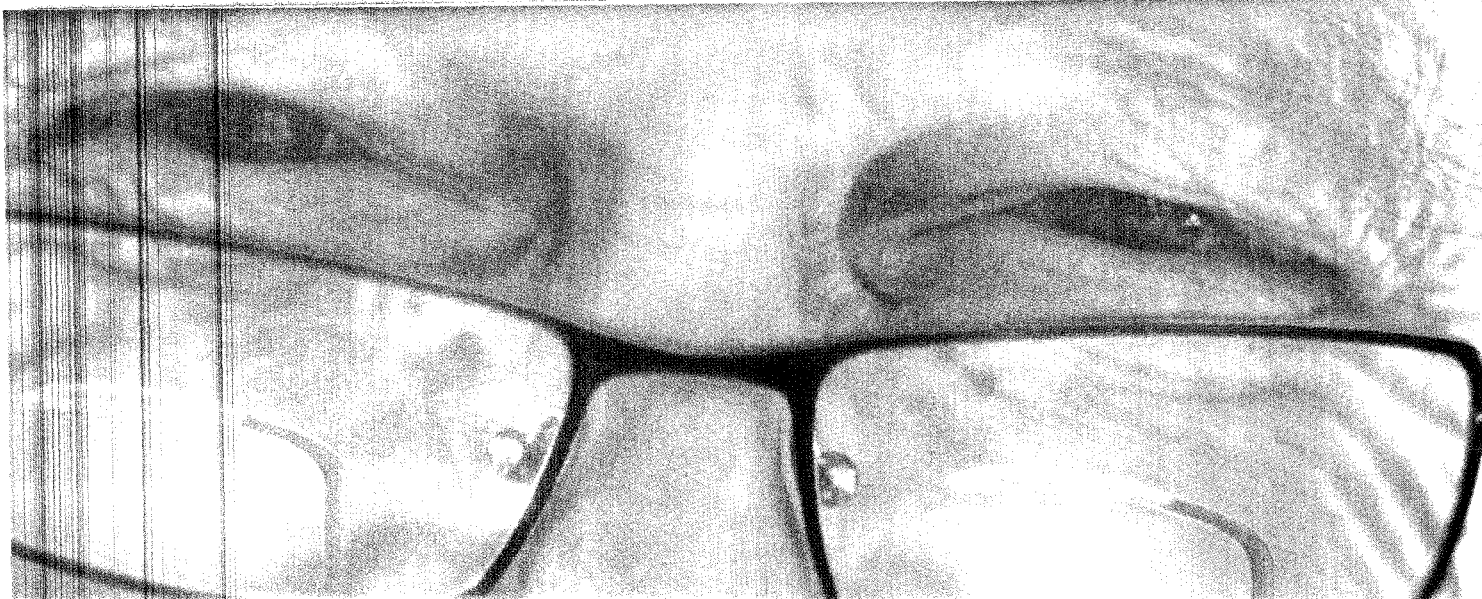
holder, the somewhat less miraculously engineered Soviet Antonov An-124.

The A380 can fly as fast as a Boeing 747-400, and farther, and the twin passenger decks running the full length of its fuselage give it half again more cabin space.

However, the only expressions of awe over the A380's specifications that I've heard have been awful predictions of the crowding inside. These tend to be somewhat exaggerated. "Oh, my God—Southwest to Tampa with a thousand people!" said a member of my immediate family who often shepherds kids to Grandma's on budget carriers while their dad has to take an earlier flight "for business reasons."

Airbus maintains that with its recommended seating configuration the A380 will hold 555 passengers, versus about 412 in a 747-400. The U.S. House of Representatives, the Senate, the president, the vice-president, the Cabinet, two swing-voting Supreme Court justices, and Karl Rove can all fly together in an A380. (Maybe *that* statistic will create some popular excitement, if they fly far enough away.) But the London

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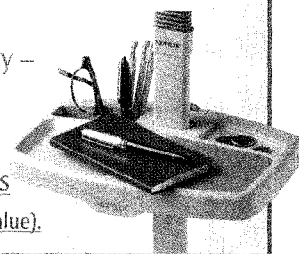
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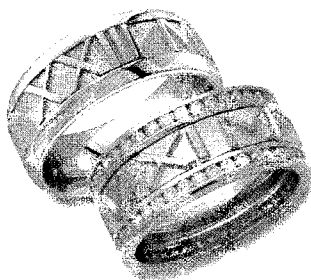
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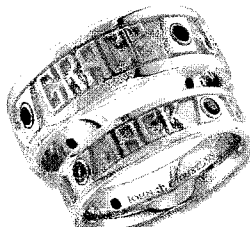


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Sunday Times has reported that Emirates, an airline with forty-five of the new planes on order, "would pack as many as 649 passengers into the A380." The president of Emirates, Tim Clark, told *The Times*, "Personally, I'd have liked to put 720 seats in." And the chairman of Virgin Atlantic Airways, Sir Richard Branson, has bragged that each Virgin A380 will have a beauty parlor, a gym, double beds, and a casino—three out of four of which sound worse than 719 seatmates.

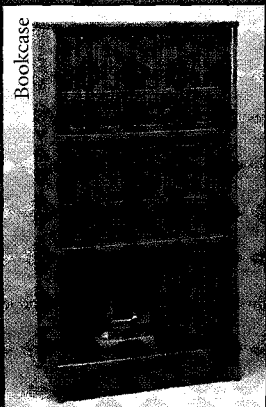
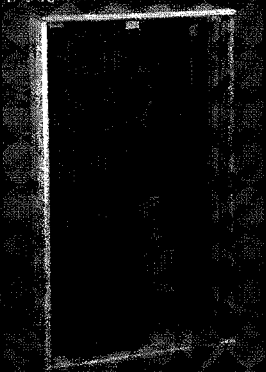
I consulted an old friend, Peter Flynn, who is the sales director for Airbus North America. He assured me that the A380 is an incredible airplane. It didn't sound like mere professional assurance. Peter was a Navy helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War and remembers when flying was really a stimulating adventure.

Two months to the day after the A380 first became airborne, Peter and I were at Airbus headquarters, in Toulouse, France, in the A380 systems-testing facility. The building is as blank-walled as the Kaaba and much larger. We stood on a glassed-in balcony three stories above the main floor looking at something called the Iron Bird. This is a full-scale installation of all the mechanical, electrical, and hydraulic connections within an A380 and of all the moving parts to which they are joined except the engines. The Iron Bird was very busy trying out the levers, gears, cylinders, struts, and things-I-don't-know-the-names-of that work the landing gear, rudder, elevators, ailerons, and things-I-don't-know-the-names-of-either.

We think of a passenger plane as a pod, a capsule wafting through the atmosphere containing mainly us and, if we're lucky, our luggage. Jet power plants are simply automatic typhoons, effortlessly blowing hot air. And while we fervently hope the jets continue to do that, it doesn't occur to us that an airliner has a greater confusion of innards than anything we dissected in science lab, even if we went to veterinary school. I wonder what the ancient Romans would have divined from such entrails. Certainly not aviation. The Iron Bird couldn't have looked less avian. Nor—airplanes being made of aluminum and

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carbon-fiber composites and such—was much ferrous metal involved. The iron in the Iron Bird was in the steel ramps and ladders branching over and through it so that engineers could go to and fro.

Our corporate tour guide, the cheerful and patient Debra Batson, the manager for “scientific media,” pointed out one of the Iron Bird’s most important components. This looked to me like a tangle of extension cords from an over-ambitious attempt at outdoor Christmas lighting. Airbus was the first producer of commercial aircraft to make its planes all fly-by-wire. That is, there are no rods or cables—nothing that can be pushed or yanked—between the flyer and the flown. Everything is accomplished by computer command. And I trust that the nosewheel pays more attention to its e-mail than I do to mine.

Debra pointed out another of the most important components, which looked like a tangle of garden hoses from an attempt to put out the fire caused by

drive the other buses, and what would happen to the bus riders.

I *did* get carried away thinking about the miracle of engineering. It is not vouchsafed even to the pope to see the very mechanism by which miracles are performed. Would the pope be as confused by his kind of miracle as I was by the Iron Bird? Would this affect the doctrine of papal infallibility?

“Above my pay grade,” Peter said. He and Debra and I went to the other side of the building to look at the cockpit simulators. These were arrayed along a wall and curtained off like private viewing booths for the kind of movie you aren’t supposed to see. We peeked inside one. That kind of movie wasn’t playing on the simulator’s windscreen. A speeding runway came toward us, followed by dropping land, and enveloping haze, and more vertigo than we would have felt if the floor had moved. It hadn’t. “Unfortunately,” Peter said, “the rock-and-roll simulator was booked

The plane’s maiden flight did not spark the world’s imagination. Or it did—with mental images of a boarding process like going to the Hamptons on a summer Friday by foot with carry-on baggage.

the outdoor Christmas lighting. This was the hydraulic system that operates the A380’s control surfaces. In the A380 the pressure in the hydraulic system has been increased from the usual 3,000 pounds per square inch to 5,000 psi, making the system smaller, lighter, and as powerful as the kick to the back of my passenger seat from the child sitting behind me. The hydraulics also handle the braking on the A380’s twenty-wheel main landing gear. A 302-page promotional Airbus publication titled *A New Dimension in Air Travel* informed me that “the brake is capable of stopping 45 double-decker buses traveling at 200 mph, simultaneously, in under 25 seconds.” It is an ambition of mine to learn enough math to figure out comparisons like that and write them myself. But I’m afraid I’d get carried away with digressions about what kind of engine you’d have to put in a double-decker bus to make it go that fast, where you’d drive it, how you’d find forty-four people to

up today. You can crash that one. And it makes really embarrassing noises.”

The simulator we were in was computer-linked to the Iron Bird. Two pilots in sports clothes sat at the controls while people with clipboards stood behind them taking notes. The pilots didn’t seem to do much. Mostly they tapped on computer keyboards or fiddled with a trackball mouse. This was what was causing the frenetic activity in the Iron Bird—a teenager’s immersion in Grand Theft Auto leading to an actual car’s being stolen somewhere.

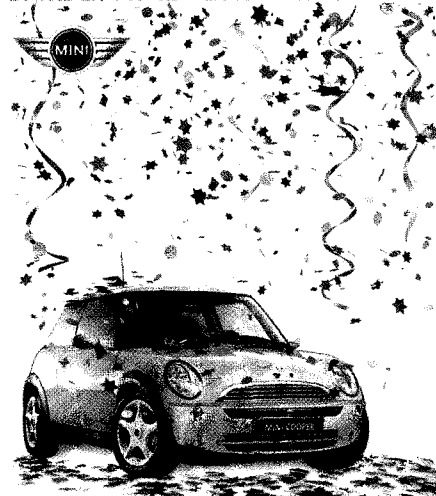
I sat in the pilot seat of another simulator. Peter took the copilot position. There wasn’t even a jump seat for Debra. “This whole big damn thing,” I said, “is flown by ... you and me?”

“Yep,” Peter said, “and it doesn’t need me.”

I, however, couldn’t find any controls except rudder pedals to pump. I hope these weren’t computer-linked to anything and that I didn’t initiate wild

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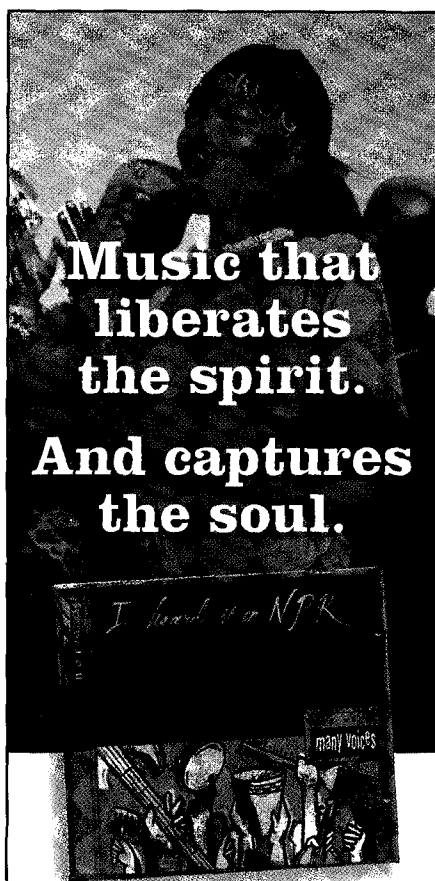
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yaw that knocked any Iron Bird engineers off their ramps and ladders. In front of me, instead of a yoke, was a foldout desktop. Perhaps these days the most important function of a pilot is to fill out Homeland Security forms with information on suspicious passengers.

"Look over to your left," Peter said.

"But it's like the joystick on an Atari game," I said.

"Yep," Peter said.

"Could you fly one of these?" I asked. "I mean, and land it?"

"Yep," Peter said. "The computers do all the work."

And there were a lot of computers—eight LCD screens. They showed ... well, they showed lots of things.

"I've never played Atari," I said.

Debra explained that the A380 has essentially the same computer hardware and, indeed, essentially the same cockpit as all other Airbus aircraft, from the 107-seat A318 on up.

"So you just build a plane," I said, "and the cockpit plugs in like a memory stick."

"I don't think we put it that way in the promotional literature," Debra said.

The promotional literature cites the advantages of "Flight Operational Commonality." Airbus estimates that pilots of its A340 series aircraft, which carry 300 to 380 passengers, can be certified to fly the A380 with just a week or two of additional training, thanks to the adaptive flexibility of computer technology.

I've never liked computers as much as I like the stuff that I call hardware. Computers seem a little too adaptively flexible, like the strange natives, odd societies, and head cases we study in the social sciences. There's more opposable thumb in the digital world than I care for; it's awfully close to human.

"Does spam ever pop up on the cockpit computer screens?" I asked. "Or unwanted Jude Law babysitter sex videos?"

"No," said Debra.

Debra took us to the A380 interior mock-up, to see how the human beings that we'll be awfully close to will be seated on the A380. Toulouse, of course, is where Lautrec was from—

he of perfect proportions for modern airline seating. But I didn't mention it. Debra did mention that Airbus has no final responsibility for what airlines do with the A380's interior, let alone for the behavior of the passengers. But Airbus tries to keep air steerage from being foisted on the public. And the designers of the A380 interior mock-up tried to wrest the graciously spacious from the ghastly vast.

Clever partitioning eliminated the tube-of-doom look and gave the rows of seats theaterlike proportions. In theaters, after all, people regularly sit more tightly confined in harder chairs for worse experiences than an airline flight. At least that was my experience with *Rent*. In the forward cabin wide steps rose to the upper deck, and in the tail a spiral staircase descended. For some reason a spiral staircase always adds zest to a setting. Perhaps it speaks to the DNA helix in us all.

Airbus wasn't trying to kid anyone with this mock-up. No bowling alleys, squash courts, or lap pools were to be seen. Instead there was a small duty-free shop, a couple of miniature barrooms where you could stand with your foot on the rail, a nook with built-in davenport, and other places in which you could stretch, be free and easy, and not feel like you were trapped in a Broadway extravaganza and would catch hell from your wife and the eighteen people between you and the aisle if you bolted.

The first-class section, of course, was supplied with those investment bankers' La-Z-Boys—Laissez-Faire-Boys, if you will—that can turn themselves into club chairs, chaise longues, or featherbeds and are equipped with buttons to press to get practically anything you want other than Jude Law's babysitter. Business class had something similar, with maybe one fewer caviar spoon and champagne bucket per customer.

But most of us travel as plain old "gate freight." The A380's size is what seems to worry people, yet the size is also the selling point—offering potential comfort as well as potential low fares. The A380, although it contains 50 percent more room than a 747, is supposed to contain only 35 percent more seats. The

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A380's upper passenger deck is almost as wide as the main deck of a 747, and the lower one is nineteen inches wider. Airbus says proudly—a bit too proudly—that 1.3 inches in seat width is gained in economy class. This is modest progress. The 747 was introduced thirty-five years ago. I've gained 1.3 inches in seat width since the last time I bought pants.

A better measure of comfort than width is what's termed pitch. This is the distance between my expanding posterior and the aching back of the person in front of me. Airbus wants seats to have a minimum pitch of thirty-four inches and urges airlines to choose the thinnest seatback designs. But room is lost to that Satan's looking glass, the in-seat video screen.

A thirty-two-inch pitch, or even less, is common in the airline industry. I am five feet nine. Sitting in a living-room chair, I can measure twenty-six inches from my wallet to the disappearance of

The mock-up also had a mood-lighting system that projected upon the cabin ceiling a beautiful morning, noon, or nighttime sky, according to the hour of the day. This would be perfectly unnecessary if the fool in the window seat would quit watching *Wedding Crashers*, open his shade, and look outside.

I looked outside myself, and a real A380 was standing on a taxiway. The Airbus corporate complex sprawls like an American Sunbelt development, but with the Toulouse airport at the center of it instead of a golf course. The A380 was a three-wood and a five-iron away. It didn't look so large. Then I noticed next to the A380 a wide-body A340, the largest Airbus plane until now. The A340 was diminutive in its ordinary hugeness.

Even so, the A380 was more impressive for its presence than for its bulk. The wingspan is 261 feet eight inches—fifty-three feet longer than an A340-600's. There is a reassuring double

for long-range flights. The decks are contained in an oval cross section with a smooth ship-hull curve. The wings sweep back at 33 degrees, almost in the shape of a jib, and the stabilizer fin is as wide and tall and rakishly set as a Cunard funnel. The A380 seemed nautical—more liner than airliner. No one ever quailed at the prospect of the *Queen Mary 2*'s carrying 720 passengers.

"Five hundred and fifty-five," Debra corrected.

The A380—the only one flying at that time—taxied away and then turned and rolled in our direction. Now it did look like an airplane, carrying itself with dignity and tending a bit to embonpoint. It had none of the fashionable emaciation of the old 707, with its gaunt runway-model (as it were) looks. Nor did it have the DC-10's scary put-the-engines-anywhere accessorizing style. Rather, the A380 had *ton*. (And tonnage.)

"Can I get on a test ride?" I asked.

"No," Debra said.

"Why?"

"Insurance," Peter said.

"Insurance" is not usually a romantic word, but think of death and all the other romantic things there are to be insured against. Maybe aviation hasn't lost its glamour.

The A380 rose decisively, and before I thought it would. A 747 needs a third of a mile more to take off. The A380 flew over our heads with a Brobdingnagian whisper. It makes half a 747's noise. And then the A380 flew away, into a haze very similar to the haze projected on the windscreen of the A380 cockpit simulator. Let the haze stand for predictions about the future of travel. Will it ever be fun again?



my trouser creases. Subtract another four inches for the TV-thickened seat in front of me, and stuffing a copy of *The Truth About Hillary* into my seatback pocket means arthroscopic surgery.

In the economy section of the A380 mock-up Airbus designers compensated for this dark truth with relentlessly cheerful carpet and upholstery in subtropical-fruit colors. I think they overdid it. One shade of citron pleaded to be called "Lemony Snicket."

amount of surface to the A380's wing. This wing is so thick where it meets the fuselage that you could park a car inside. The A380 cockpit, instead of being perched on the catbird seat like a 747's, is placed low in the fuselage, where the pilots can mind their business with the ground. It gives the plane a high-foreheaded, thoughtful look.

The A380 in fact has not two but three decks—the lowest devoted to luggage, freight, and crew rest facilities

Anyway, building an A380 seemed like fun. Debra and Peter and I went to the production line. Surprise at the scale of the A380 was quieted by surprise at the scale of the place where three more of them were being built. I did not know there was so much indoors. The factory, Debra said, can be seen from space.

Actually, the A380 is built all over Europe. This was the final-assembly plant. The plane arrives in seven pieces

sounding like some provincial soup recipe: three slices of fuselage, two wings, a fin, and a tail. The parts come to Toulouse by way of ocean freighters, canal barges, road convoys, and Airbus's whale-shaped and more than whale-sized Beluga transport plane. (Measured by cargo volume, the Beluga is even larger than the A380.) I particularly liked picturing whole wings and great cabin sections strapped to humble barges, bringing a bit of industrial reality (and swamped decks) to people taking those French canal-boat tours and trying to pretend that travel is fun.

The constituent parts of an A380 are placed in a single enormous jig—a Jell-O mold with the miniature marshmallows, fruit slices, and nutmeats aligned by means of laser technology to degrees of precision that take a lot of zeros behind a variety of decimal points to express.

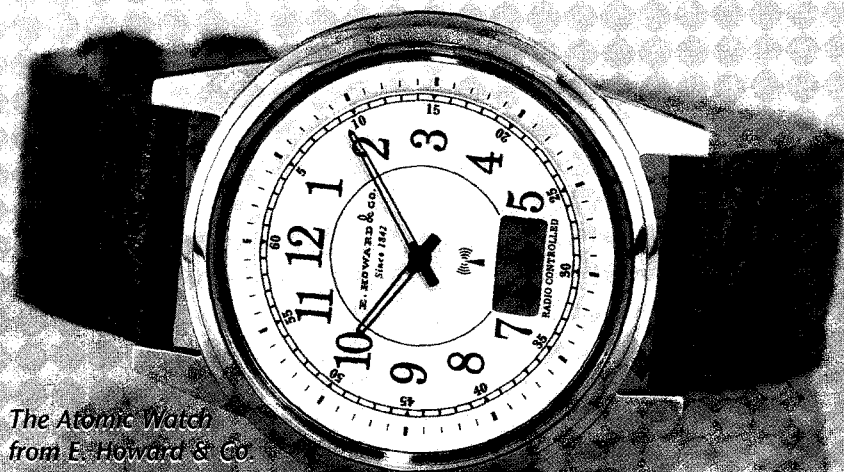
Engineering miracles have always required genius, but the miraculousness has gotten to a point where comparable genius is needed to explain it. Fortunately, a genius showed us around the factory. This was Charles Champion, an Airbus executive vice-president and the head of the A380 program since the project was launched, nearly five years ago. Champion has since been promoted to chief operating officer of Airbus. But he is first an engineer. And he all but glowed with enjoyment at the A380's engineering.

For example, the A380's wings are clad in an esoteric alloy. What an ordinary mechanical engineer would call "unobtainium."

The wing panels are up to 108 feet long and nine feet wide, and in places they are only an eighth of an inch thick. They need to hold a "double curved aerodynamic shape." The way to achieve this is with a twenty-four-hour application of varying temperatures and loads to create "stress relaxation" and "permanent deformation." The process is called "creep age forming," and opportunities for Michael Jackson wisecracks aside, I have no idea what I'm talking about.

But Charles Champion did. And he made everything, if not exactly clear, clearly exciting.

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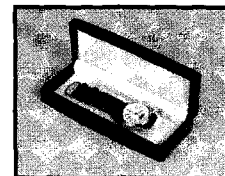
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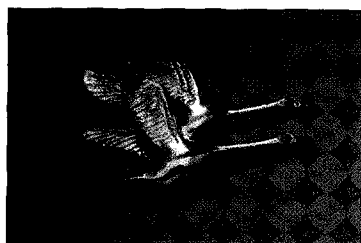
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Peter was looking around as if he were on a machinery Mt. Olympus, watching the powers of the firmament come together, this Leda mating (aided by laser technology) with that swan. Peter is a romantic about machines. When he was a helicopter pilot, machines saved his life any number of times. Of course, it was machines that put his life in jeopardy. But that's romance.

Charles Champion told us how the first A380 built wasn't flown but was towed to a static test platform, where its wings and fuselage were twisted and bent and loaded with weights until the plane was destroyed.

"That must have been horrible," I said, "to see that happen to your first A380."

"Engineers love to break things," Champion said.

And French industrial workers love to make them. At least they seemed to at Airbus. The assembly plant had a calm, cheerful, collegial air. Everything was tidy and well lit. Only the most muffled noises of manufacture could be heard. If Charles Dickens had visited Airbus, he might have given up on the frenzied life of writing and lecturing that eventually killed him and reconsidered the blacking factory.

It had been a day of reconsideration for me, too. I was reconsidering my free-trade principles. The governments of France, Germany, Britain, and other European Union countries have "invested" in the A380. Boeing calls this a subsidy and has gone off in a snit to the World Trade Organization—as if Boeing didn't sell *Air Force One* to the U.S. government for a pretty penny. Should I be upset that taxes on Europeans will help pay for American airfares?

I was also reconsidering my free-market ideals. Charles Champion said that among the difficulties of the A380 program were the political considerations of which factories were to make what where. The result, it seems to me, is that the most expensive parts, such as the wings and the cockpit, are manufactured in the most expensive places, such as England and France. A Chinese electronics company might as well outsource production to Manhattan and Beverly Hills. But do we really want Guatemalan child laborers sewing the

treads to the tires on our landing gear?

And I was reconsidering the French. They were welcoming at Airbus and everywhere else in Toulouse. They didn't make fun of Peter when he spoke their language or me when I spoke mine. Food was *magnifique*. Manners were *charmant*.

At a *magnifique* lunch given in the Airbus executive dining room by the elegant Barbara Kracht, the vice-president of media relations, manners remained *charmant* even when I asked her, "What's with the bus?"

"You could have called the company," I said, "'Airphaeton,' 'Airlimousine,' even 'Airyacht.'" She responded politely, saying that when Airbus was founded, in 1970, it was still difficult to get people to think of flying as an affordable means of transportation.

We've gotten over that little hurdle. One thing I wasn't reconsidering was air travel. I had a flight home the next day and was trying not to think about it—with some success, considering I was standing next to a vehicle designed to provide the most air travel in history.

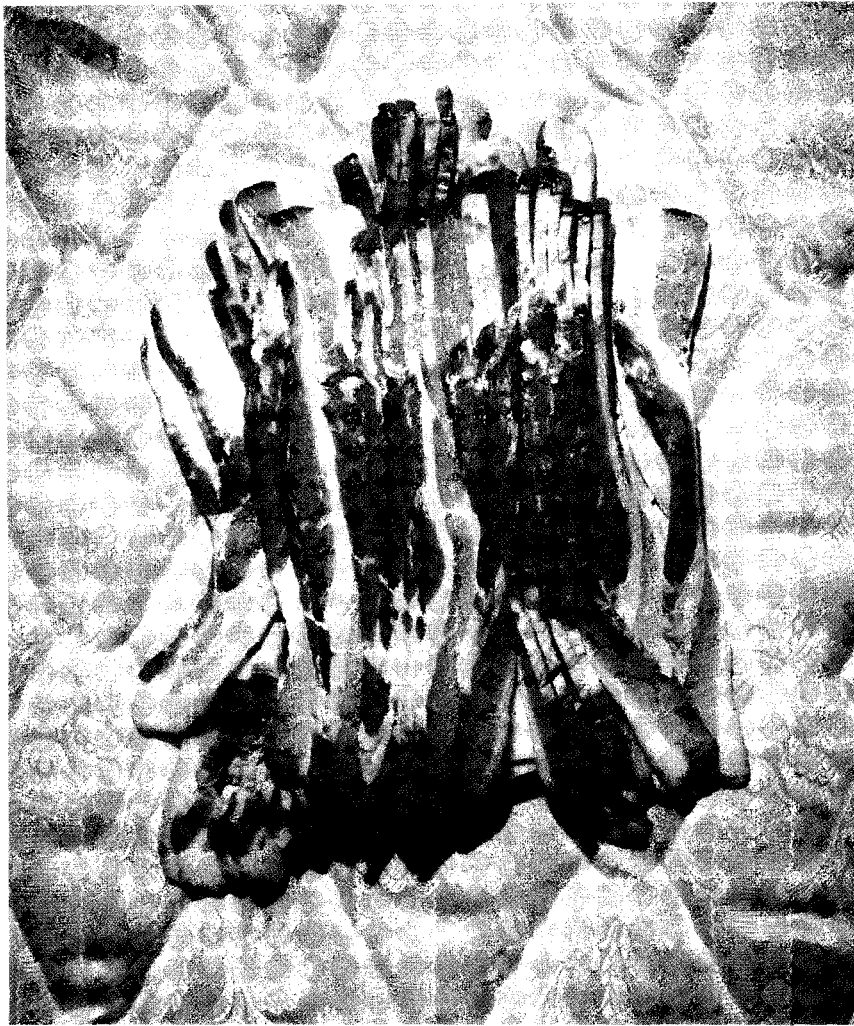
We were on a platform beside a nearly completed A380. The wingtip was just above our heads. "Go ahead," Charles Champion said to me. "Grab it." I reached up and tentatively curled my fingers over the metal. "Now pull down," he said.

The A380 wing is one of the mightiest structures ever created—9,100 square feet of ribs, spars, and skin able to thrust itself out 147 feet into nothingness and give lift to its half of 1.235 million pounds. I pulled, and this great formation bowed to my eye level, supple as a living thing.

With the whole wing flexing at my light grasp, all the poetic, fanciful wonder of living in 2005 came back to me. I'd outdone Keats and Shelley in matters of the sublime. It touched them. I touched it.

I was full of quixotic fervor. I would fly on an A380 straight to hell. And unless airport amenities, immigration clearance, baggage delivery, customs inspection, and the courtesy of security personnel improve dramatically before the A380 goes into service, I will. ▀

P.J. O'Rourke is a correspondent for The Atlantic. His most recent book is *Peace Kills*.



FOOD

Better Bacon

Artisan producers are making bacon even more irresistible

BY CORBY KUMMER

Bacon is the new chocolate (according to Dan Philips, the founder of the Bacon of the Month Club, www.gratefulpalate.com), or maybe the new olive oil (according to Ari Weinzweig, of Zingerman's, the country's leading olive-oil purveyor). A search for better bacon is under way in this country, reminiscent of the one for better beer, and with a similar lure of the forbidden.

The cult—and bacon love is still at the cult stage—won't come as a surprise to people who have looked for artisan-cured bacon over the years, although even they will be pleased by the recent improvements and wider selection. To anyone still buying supermarket

bacon, the difference in flavor will be remarkable. Standard bacon tastes tinny and one-dimensional compared with the deep, subtle, lightly smoky flavor of good artisan bacon. After getting beyond the wonderful crisp of supermarket bacon you notice the typically heavy hand with often synthesized flavorings and even egregious "liquid smoke." Artisan bacon retains the flavor of cured meat—familiar to anyone who has eaten Canadian bacon, which is taken from the lean back loin rather than the fatty belly, and is cured but unsmoked. It shows that there's a middle ground between the comparatively bland Canadian bacon (which to me

tastes like thin, dried-out cooked pork) and the blast of salt, sugar, fat, and artificial flavorings that is supermarket bacon. You can see in artisan bacon the relation to country ham, which is the meaty leg, cured much longer (good ham is cured for more than a year, as Peter Kaminsky lovingly recounts in *Pig Perfect*). And as with everything that has real, nuanced, lasting flavor, you need much less of it to be satisfied—a particular virtue with a food that is anywhere from one to two thirds fat.

Artisan bacon is both less messy and easier to cook than supermarket slices; its lower water content means that fewer scalding specks of wet fat will shoot out of the pan. It contains less water because it is cured with a mixture of salt, sugar, and spices either rubbed into the meat dry or dissolved in a marinade, rather than cured with brine injected by hundreds of needles (large manufacturers do this to save time and labor and to add water weight—you pay for that pool of water in the tight plastic pack). Less fat collects in the pan, because during the longer curing and smoking process—a week or two rather than a few hours—a good deal of fat disappears.

Even the shape is startling. The first time I saw a slice of Niman Ranch bacon, from the cooperative that has helped many family farms survive by producing and selling better pork, I thought it must be textured soy protein. The color of the meat was a perfect cherry-wood brown, and the long rectangle was flat and so straight-edged that it looked cut with a ruler.

There's no denying that bacon is good in pretty much anything. Sara Perry called her 2002 book *Everything Tastes Better With Bacon*, and Ann Hodgman gave her secret for making anything delicious in her very funny *Beat This!*: "I just double the chocolate and add some bacon." Even Jews who have a horror of fresh pork can happily consume multiple slices of bacon, perhaps because the curing process produces a very different sort of meat from the frankly pink, bluntly sweet, and very un-beeflike pork (as Elissa Altman, who was brought up in a Jewish home, theorized in a 2003 paean to Connecticut pork in *The Hartford Courant*).

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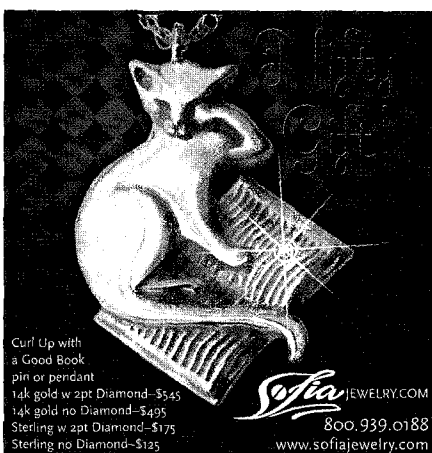
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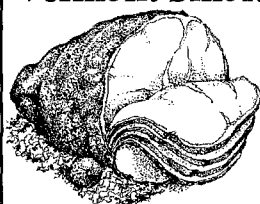


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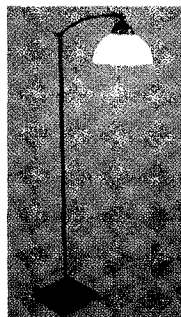
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Despite my taste of Niman Ranch's
impressive rashers, I was a late-
comer to the new baconmania. Last
spring I began to catch up by arrang-
ing to taste a number of the country's
most highly regarded artisan bacons.
I learned both how far artisan bacon
has progressed beyond supermarket
bacon and how little I agree with many
bacon-raters. Specifically, I found that
seemingly innocuous flavors such as
pepper and maple, and smoking over
special woods or double-smoking, cre-
ate bacon that is both less satisfying
on its own and less useful as a flavor
component than applewood bacon
(the only kind Niman Ranch makes),
which is relatively mild but by no
means wimpy. This is much closer to
French bacon, generally sold in slabs
and diced to create little rectangular
lardons, which are fried before being
added to, say, coq au vin or boeuf bour-
guignon. (Italians don't even use bacon
as we know it. For them pancetta—cured
but unsmoked pork belly—is a ubiqui-
tous flavor enhancer in sauces, soups,
vegetables, and stews. Chinese cooks use
fresh pork belly almost as often. African-
American and southern cooks use fat-
back, the strip of fat above the loin.)

I tasted a half dozen bacons blind,
and was gratified to find that my favor-
ite was cured and smoked not in the
backwoods of Kentucky (currently
the national repository of ham wis-
dom) or in rural Wisconsin (home of
Nueske's, a frequent winner at tastings)
but an hour from the small northern-
Connecticut town where I grew up.
Nodine's Smokehouse is just a few
miles from the very posh Litchfield, but
the prefab-looking building where the
bacon is made is not at all reminiscent
of the expensively quaint New England
houses close by. I learned on a recent
visit that Nodine's gourmet shop, in a
weathered barn familiar from long-ago
family excursions, is on the farm where
Ronald and Johanne Nodine first tried
their hand at meat smoking as a sec-
ond career, in 1969. Their business was
chiefly custom-smoking meat that local
farmers and hunters brought in; even
today, in the vastly expanded facility
Nodine's now occupies, various car-
casses hang in the "custom" room, to

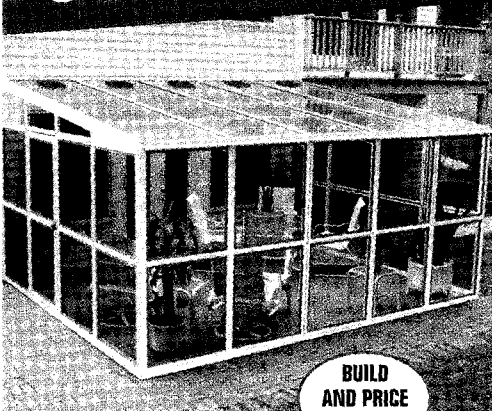
be cured with secret rub recipes and smoked over special logs.

Ronald Nodine is a former engineer who found tinkering with cure recipes and smokers to his liking. His scientific training led him to record every new recipe and slight variation in temperature or timing, and to refine experiments that pleased customers. Though Connecticut cannot claim, like Kentucky, to have generations of tradition or the classic climate for curing ham (hot and damp during the summer, cool but not freezing in the winter—also great for aging bourbon), the Nodine family has evolved a method for making “apple-smoked” bacon that stands up quite well, I think. My only regret is that their meat is neither organic nor, like Niman Ranch’s, guaranteed to be raised by family farmers. Nodine’s buys pork from one distributor in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and does not specify feed, antibiotic use, or raising conditions.

David Yurgelan, the marketing manager for Nodine’s, showed me (and my non-pork-eating but curious father) the stacks of neatly trimmed rectangular bellies waiting to be cured, all a soft pink and with a surprisingly thin coating of fat. The bellies arrive skinned, and Nodine’s trims them to size. The cure for apple-smoked bacon contains just salt, sugar, water, and nitrites; the company also makes a nitrite-free version, which does not have bacon’s characteristic reddish color and tastes more like uncured cooked meat. (Nitrites have largely been cleared as a health concern in curing meat, but alarm lingers from the 1970s over their possible role as a carcinogen. They set the red color and also much of the cured flavor.) The cure is not hand-rubbed but put into a steel vacuum tank along with the bellies, which are tumbled with the tank tilted like a carnival ride. Yurgelan explained that the vacuum-tumbling cuts time and the amount of marinade required, and said that even though the company uses a wet rather than a dry rub, the method produces nothing like the amount of water in commercial bacon. In fact, like much artisan bacon, Nodine’s yields about a third more cooked bacon per pound than most supermarket brands.

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A	U	D	I	P	I	C	K	E	T	E	R	S
R	D	W	E	L	L	E	C	A	R	E	T	S
P	I	O	N	E	E	R	S	C	I	B	S	E
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R	E	T	A	I	L	E	R	D	A	K	A	R
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R	E	T	A	I	N	I	N	G	O	N	C	E
E	R	N	S	T	I	N	T	E	R	N	E	T

“Alien Invasion”

The “invasion of aliens” was the addition of “et” to eleven clue answers; the cryptic rings spell CROP CIRCLE. Across: 1. C + ALF’S + KIN 6. P(UP + A)E 10. A(U)D + I 11. PI(C)KER’S 12. D + WELL 13. CA(R)Y’S 14. PI(ONE)ERS 19. MEL(L)ON 20. TON(y) 21. SLOW LANE (anag.) 25. (t)RAILER 26. DAKAR (anag.) 28. SCAM(P)S 31. CO(S)MIC 33. B(R)AY 34. CACHE (homophone) 35. RAINING (homophone) 36. ONCE (hidden) 37. ERNST (anag.) 38. INTERN (homophone) Down: 1. C + ARP’S 2. AUDILE (anag.) 3. FI(E)ND 4. S(PL)EEN 5. (n)ICER 6. P(E)ACE 7. UTRILLO (anag.) 8. ART SONG (anag.) 9. (I)ESSEN 15. OUTSTAY (pig Latin) 16. ED + S + ELS 17. B(L)ANK 18. SLEEP (rev.) 19. MO(RR) + IS 22. DECREER (anag.) 23. CAME + R + AS 24. CRICK (double def.) 26. DAM(AG)E 27. A(PIE)CE 28. SABRE (anag.) 29. PLA(Q)T 30. DEC + OR 32. O + DIN

FIVE GREAT BLTs

Atlantic Baking Co., 351 Main Street, Rockland, ME (207-596-0505). Boar's Head standard bacon on good artisan sourdough bread, with the useful trick of slow-roasting tomatoes to give them flavor and keep the sandwich from being too wet.

The City Bakery, 3 West 18th Street, New York, NY (212-366-1414). Niman Ranch bacon on mini-brioche hamburger buns from Eli's Bread, with homemade, lightly mustardy mayonnaise. (Have a pretzel croissant on the side, a great innovation.)

Zingerman's Roadhouse, 2501 Jackson Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI (734-663-3663). Nueske's bacon, a perennial taste-test winner, with Hellmann's mayo on toasted Jewish rye or, if you ask (and you should), on the very American and very good "Roadhouse bread," made with equal parts rye, cornmeal, and white flour and a touch of molasses.

Perhaps because **Lynn's Paradise Cafe** (984 Barret Avenue, Louisville, KY; 502-583-3447) is in the heart of the territory where great bacon is expected, it varies the classic: local bacon from Gatton Farms and parmesan-garlic mayo on toasted buttermilk bread, with fried green tomatoes as the "T."

The Jar, 8225 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA (323-655-6566). Nueske's bacon on toasted sourdough bread with aioli, served with homemade pickles, a local favorite.

The plant is hardly rustic. The floors are hoseable concrete, the "smoke-houses" stainless-steel-lined chambers with shiny pipes that deliver smoke to the top and, for the apple-smoked bacon (the best seller, though Nodine's makes other flavors), steam to moisten the meat. Nodine's doesn't actually use applewood. Nor does it use logs, which produce interesting, strong, and smoky—but less controllable—flavor. Instead it buys sawdust made from a mixture of hardwoods, including hickory and maple, and adds to it apple pomace from Connecticut cider mills—the pulp remaining after cider is pressed. In the small

steel cubes where the smoke is produced, sawdust travels down a hopper to be heated on a rotating hot iron turntable and then drops onto the bottom, where it is slowly burned to smoldering cinders. The processes of creating and adding smoke, and of varying timing and temperature, are strictly controlled, programmed, and graphed, which they would not be in a rustic operation. But the bacon tastes both good and honest (it is available in many supermarkets, and by mail order from www.nodine-smokehouse.com). It is fully cooked during smoking, to the USDA-required temperature of 150° for cooked pork. In a smoke-scented room filled with dozens of mahogany-colored bacon slabs, Yurgelan pointed to the uneven ends that would be trimmed before the slabs were put through the slicer and said, "Guys here eat bacon all day."

My own favorite use of bacon is as lardons for flavoring other dishes. I start by cutting quarter-inch cubes

To anyone still buying supermarket bacon, the difference in flavor will be remarkable. Standard bacon tastes one-dimensional compared with the deep, subtle, lightly smoky flavor of artisan bacon.

from a slab and rendering them until they brown. (The rendered fat can be used to cook, say, onions and thick-sliced parboiled potatoes; Perry's book gives dozens of recipes.) As for cooking bacon in slices, which is the way most artisan bacon is sold and most people eat it, I long ago adopted Barbara Kafka's method from her pioneering *Micro-wave Gourmet*: lay the strips on two to four paper towels, cover with another, and cook at high power for three and a half minutes. If you have time and you need a supply for making, say, a stack of BLTs (the apogee of bacon in America; see box), try cooking slices on a wire rack over a foil-lined pan in a regular oven at 200° for two and a half hours. This method renders colorless fat while producing beautifully crisp, perfectly shaped slices that are easy to take bites of in a BLT without pulling out the whole slice. National BLT Month will be observed in April, and it's never too early to get into shape.

SHIRAZ WITH BACON

Big(gish), bacon-friendly reds

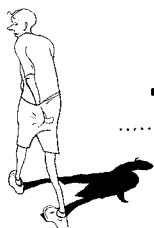
There's something snazzy about the name Shiraz. That might account for some of the wine's recent popularity: it sounds less fey than "Syrah," which is the same grape. Syrah isn't fey. It can be as powerful as the biggest red. Yet Cabernet, Merlot, even Pinot Noir, entered casual wine drinkers' vocabularies, and Syrah didn't—despite the efforts of a group of renegade northern-California winemakers, led by Randall Grahm, of Bonny Doon, and John Alban, of Alban Vineyards. They reasoned that because their region was closer in climate to the Rhone Valley, birthplace of the world's great Syrahs, than to Bordeaux, home of Cabernet Sauvignon, a California Syrah could be still greater than a California Cab.

The "Rhone Rangers," as they were called, made some very good wines. But it was Australians who finally made Shi-

raz, as they and South Africans call Syrah, an American household (or at least wine bar) name. Australian Shiraz is defined by the toasted oak barrels in which it is aged. The charred wood gives Shiraz smoke—and when the barrels are imported from France, says Max Allen, the author of *Crush* and other friendly and terrifically clear wine guides, a "lovely smoky bacon-fat aroma that's as irresistible as bacon."

Allen told me recently that he is excited by a new style, a bit lighter than the country's typical heavily alcoholic Shirazes. He recommends the medium-priced Hilltops Shiraz, from Clonakilla, a winery north of Canberra (it is available in many states for about \$25; you can call the distributor at 800-485-5753 to find out where near you). These Shirazes could be taken for Rhone Syrahs, he says—but for the Australian "ripeness," which is absolutely unmistakable. ■

Corby Kummer is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Our Cryptic Hobby

Puzzle-makers must have their avocations, and ours is encapsulated in this cryptic crossword, as ten diagram squares will reveal. The central Across entry, otherwise unclued, names the hobby in question. Answers include 11 capitalized words.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 181.

ACROSS

1. Shock police back in some trees (7)
6. Someone who jokes about first of ships from outer space (6)
11. Lawyer for Scopes, after his initial pointer (5)
12. Knowledge about wet conditions in part of France (8)
13. Hairstyles following current figures on the silver screen (9)
14. Jet into Kentucky (4)
15. Choose pilaf, perhaps, with the Spanish fish (8, 3)
17. Article wrapped by flower in a graceful way (7)
18. Mister Riley retains a woman's first name (5)
19. Miserable lunatic, regressive tyrant (6)
27. Eponym of a foundation for poor Greeks (6)
29. Patricia, keeping hot or cool (4)
30. Instrument's protector mostly carrying it (6)
33. Rare, briefer, shifting hazard for sailors (7, 4)
34. Fashionable Christian bar accruing interest the wrong way (4)
35. Girl in love charged items, making goofs (9)
36. Dwarf constrained by one nickname (7)
37. Stone slab found in wastelands (5)
38. Scoundrels consent to returning early satellite (7)
39. Gad all about in turn with toy (3, 4)

DOWN

1. Careful in the extreme, writes a novel (7)
2. A Republican tirade, unmitigated (6)
3. Timed after the starter is fixed (6)
4. Not trusting moving in neutral (9)
5. True small-time chick's comment? (5)
6. Elvis companies reveal nothing (8)
7. Martyr erroneously holds back spacy model (6)
8. Chopped and dug around cave's opening (6)
9. Concluding in failure, making mistakes (9)
10. Handle ice Alec crushed (7)
16. Gent with headwear eating hot tart (7)
18. Kid with empty bag (4)
20. Fear change, like somewhat holy chief (9)
21. Legislature's daily fare (4)
22. In sequence, Air Force attacking with planes (8)
23. Small vibration that is right for a maker of rider's gear (8)
24. Wake up lass having to be in Paris (3, 4)
25. Happy at last, you have a snack, making a sandwich of peanut butter (6)
26. Some empty land for noblemen by the sound (7)
28. Suggest entering true religious practice of the East (6)
30. Bud Stone and Pa's wife (5)
31. Inventor of wild tales (5)
32. Sportscaster and hawk together? (6)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

GEORGE WOLFF, of St. Pete Beach, Florida, writes, "Can you settle a dispute for me? My wife, who is quite strict about grammar, is not prepared to accept my criticism of her use of the word *tabled*. Recently she said that an issue was *tabled* in the course of a meeting. To me, that meant it was put on the table for discussion. She insists the verb *table* means 'to put aside for another time.' If the issue had been put aside, wouldn't it have been *shelved*? In the interest of full disclosure, I must admit that I am a Canadian, fairly recently transplanted to the United States."

It's easy, isn't it, to picture someone whose arms are laden with shopping bags coming home, setting the bags down on the hall or kitchen table, and immediately doing something with their contents, such as putting them away or starting to cook with them. This in the physical world is like *tabling*, the way you think of it, in the abstract realm of meetings. But it's also easy to imagine that the person with the shopping bags might hear the phone ring, put the bags down to take the call, and forget about them for a good long while. This is the way your wife thinks of *tabling*.

Both meanings are given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In fact, curiously, the *OED* considers them to be versions of the same meaning of the verb, out of eleven possible meanings, including one specific to carpentry, one to sail-making, and one to gunnery. The relevant definition is "to lay (an appeal, proposal, resolution, bill, etc.) on the table of a deliberative or legislative assembly; hence, to bring forward or submit for discussion or consideration. In *U.S. Politics*, to lay on the table as a way of postponing indefinitely; to shelve." Thus your wife's usage

is beyond reproach. As for you, having *tabled* this matter in your sense of the word, perhaps you'd now be willing to *table* it in hers?

HANNS J. KRISTEN, of San Anselmo, California, writes, "I frequently stumble over sentences like 'He *didn't used to* forget her birthday.' Is it just me, or does this negative form of *used to* raise your hackles as well? And if it does, what would be the correct form?"

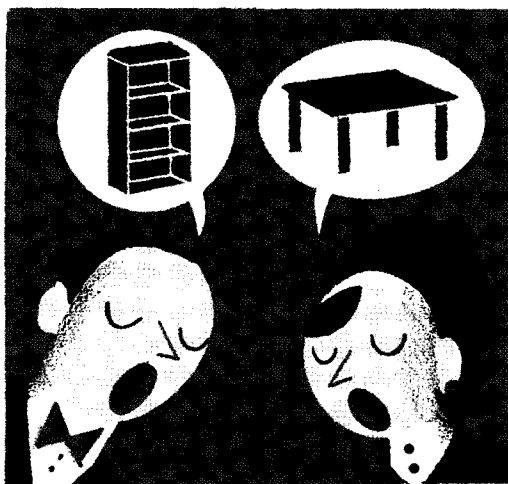
Anytime you're in a room full of usage commentators and you feel like starting a quarrel, try asking about *didn't used to*. One thing about the phrase that's generally agreed upon is

In his *Garner's Modern American Usage*, Bryan A. Garner makes a case for *didn't used to* that I find persuasive. He writes, "*Used to* is an idiomatic phrase based on an archaic meaning of *use* (= to be in the habit of). The form of the verb is fixed in the positive *used to*, and is unchanged in the far less common (and far less accepted) negative form, *didn't used to*." Garner has a good answer for your final question, too. He suggests, "Remember the standard form that can save you headaches: *never used to*."

RUTH ROZEN, of Evanston, Illinois, writes, "Isn't the plural of *e-mail* *e-mails*? I frequently hear and read *e-mails*. Indeed, in a search for the exact term *e-mails* on the Atlantic Online Web site, I found a number of instances of it. *Webster's* does not indicate the *s* for the plural form of *e-mail*. Do you agree that *e-mails* sounds wrong?"

Sorry, but no: the plural count noun *e-mails*, meaning electronic messages, has become standard, even though *e-mail* is also used like plain old *mail*, as a mass noun. (By the way, the unhyphenated *email* seems to be losing its bid to displace *e-mail* in edited writing.) The reason you won't find a plural with *s* in "*Webster's*"—either *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate* or *Webster's New World*—is that dictionaries tend to avoid using precious space to specify regular plurals, formed by adding *s* or *es*. Look up a noun, like *stamp*, that has a regular plural, and also one, like *mouse*, that has an irregular one—except, arguably, in computer contexts—and you'll see what I mean.

Do you have a language dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.



that it's informal—not top-quality standard English. But arguments break out over whether the right informal form is *didn't used to* or *didn't use to*. Proponents of *didn't use to* say that the phrase works the same way as *didn't walk* (not *didn't walked*) and *didn't have to* (not *didn't had to*). If it were as simple as that, however, I suspect that you and I would experience it as being as simple as that, and we'd write *didn't use to* without a second thought. But we don't, and we're hardly alone: *didn't used to* turns up a great deal more often in news writing than *didn't use to* does.

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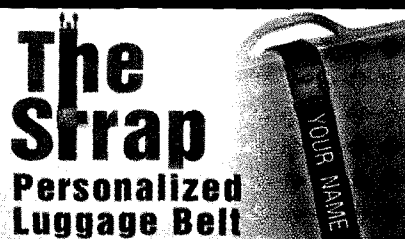
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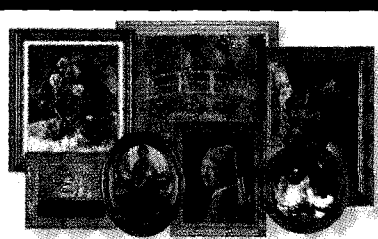


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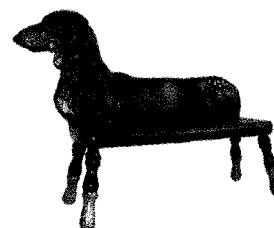


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An Old-School Copper

Jack Slipper (1924–2005)

BY MARK STEYN

“He was always affable and very much a gentle giant,” said Bruce Reynolds. “He was one of the old school,” agreed one of Reynolds’s colleagues.

Gentlemen publishers? Art dealers? Well, Reynolds has a small antiques business in South London these days, but he was being quoted in his capacity as the mastermind of Britain’s Great Train Robbery. His colleague is a rather less eminent member of the United Kingdom’s criminal class. And the man they were eulogizing was Slipper of the Yard—Detective Chief Superintendent Jack Slipper, the last British police detective to become a household name. If “Slipper of the Yard” sounds vaguely like a 1950s British movie—black-and-white crime thriller, decent old stick of a copper, girlfriend one of those burly English birds radiating health rather than sex, you catch it late at night in some motel and stick around waiting for the gunfire to start but it never does, except for a single shot in the final reel when the sweaty, rodent-like villain panics—well, Jack Slipper certainly looked the part of the Scotland Yard man. Ex-RAF, he was a tall man with copper-sized boots (size 12 in Britain, 13 in America) and a bristly pencil moustache. The tache was standard issue for police detectives when he started, though his was a rare survivor by the time he retired, in 1979.

If Slipper was indeed an old-school copper, Reynolds and Co. were old-school robbers, remnants of not exactly an age of innocence but a time many Britons now look back on fondly: the cops didn’t carry guns, and neither did the robbers; the former were known as the “Old Bill,” the latter were “diamond geezers”; and when the Bill collared one of the ne’er-do-wells, he’d say, “You’re nicked, chummy,” and the geezer would respond, “It’s a fair cop, guv.” The moral contradictions of this era of British crime are summed up in

misty Cockney reminiscences of the psychopathic Kray twins: lovely boys, proper gentlemen, always treated everyone with perfect manners—well, except for the people they killed. Years ago I used to date a nurse at the Royal London Hospital, and after her shift we’d go for a drink round the corner at the Blind Beggar, an East End landmark famed for one night in the sixties when Ronnie Kray strolled into the pub and shot his gangland rival George Cornell between the eyes. The jukebox was playing the Walker Brothers’ No. 1 hit “The Sun Ain’t Gonna Shine Any-



more.” “The sun ain’t gonna shine for him anymore,” said Ronnie.

Nor, in the end, for British gangland’s reputation as a playground for lovable rogues. Today London has worse property crime than New York, the diamond geezers have been succeeded by Jamaican drug gangs—“Yardies” with Uzis—and if you take the East London Line to Whitechapel for a pint at the Blind Beggar, remember that since the July 7 bombings the metropolitan police have had a shoot-to-kill policy on the tube. But somewhere in its folk memory much of Britain still holds a soft spot for the lads responsible for the

events of August 8, 1963. That’s when Bruce Reynolds and his comrades pulled off the Great Train Robbery, seizing the Royal Mail express from Scotland to London as it passed through Buckinghamshire and getting away with £2.6 million in used notes, which was quite a sum in 1963 and today translates to more than \$65 million.

They’d cleaned out the train without firing a single gunshot, but the driver, Jack Mills, was uncooperative, and one of the gang brutally whacked him with a cosh. Nevertheless, at a time of imperial decline abroad and government scandal at home, the public seemed to take a perverse patriotic pleasure in the crime. Pace Dean Acheson, Britain may have lost an empire but it had found its rolling stock—stripped clean with immense boldness and panache. “Britons may not admit they are proud,” wrote *The Daily Telegraph* of Sydney, “but in

private many are thinking ‘For they are jolly good felons.’”

If only they’d planned the post-robbery phase as efficiently. Investigation of the Great Train Robbery fell to the Sweeney—the metropolitan police’s mobile armed-robbery division, the Flying Squad (“Sweeney” is Cockney rhyming slang: Sweeney Todd = Flying Squad). Among the six detectives assigned to the case was a junior sergeant named Jack Slipper, who got his first break when a woman named Charmaine Biggs went on a shopping spree in a fancy West End store and paid in cash. Her husband was a petty criminal named Ronnie Biggs, and when he returned home on September 4, Detective Sergeant Slipper was waiting for him. The Great Train Robbery had been cracked within a month. The following April, Biggs and the others were sentenced to thirty years in prison.

He didn’t stay long. After fifteen months Biggs escaped from Wandsworth Gaol, getting over the wall with a rope ladder and then dropping into a waiting furniture van with a hole in its roof. He skipped to France and then Spain, Australia, and finally Brazil, where in 1974 he

renewed his acquaintance with Slipper of the Yard. Tipped off by a *Daily Express* reporter that Biggs was holed up in Rio, the detective flew out on a secret mission to recapture his man. The fugitive opened his hotel-room door to be confronted by a most un-Brazilian-looking cove with a familiar pencil moustache. "Long time no see, Ronnie," said Slipper—a line he'd apparently rehearsed.

"Fuck me," said Ronnie—a more spontaneous reaction.

That's a vernacular expression indicating amazement, not an invitation—and in any case the position was already taken, by a samba dancer called Raimunda, as Slipper was shortly to discover. The copper and his junior colleague, Sergeant Peter Jones, cuffed their man and took him to the Copacabana police station. Big mistake. Slipper had neglected to look into whether Britain and Brazil had an extradition treaty (they didn't), and by the time the authorities came to make their decision, Raimunda had revealed that she was carrying Ronnie's child. As the soon-to-be father of an impending Brazilian citizen, Biggs could not be deported. With the spectacular front-page under-cover swoop reduced to an interminable extradition case, the coppers took a plane back to Heathrow. In the middle of the flight, when Sergeant Jones got up to head for the washroom, a *Daily Mail* photographer pounced. The picture appeared in the following day's paper: Slipper dozing next to "The Empty Seat," as the headline put it. Slipper of the Yard was now Slip-up of the Yard, a bungler who had let Britain's most wanted man slip through his fingers. Biggs's Javert was transformed overnight into Inspector Clouseau.

They made a BBC drama about the incident a few years later, and Slipper successfully sued over his portrayal as a bumbling flatfoot. He complained about material such as the scene in a Rio bar where he orders "uno beero and another uno beero" and then turns

to his sergeant and mutters, "You see what we're up against, Peter. They only talk Brazilian down here." The screenwriter Keith Waterhouse recalls him as a minefield of malapropisms who told him, "No one minds a bit of dramatic licentiousness, Keith, but you have made me out to be a right prat."

By then Slipper of the Yard was the Tom Hanks figure in *Catch Me If You Can*—an earnest plodder in a raincoat. And Biggs, though no Leonardo DiCaprio, was the larky chancer who'd got away with it and escaped dreary old England for a life of "dramatic licentiousness" in Latin America—nonstop booze 'n' birds and an endless parade of fawning tourists and minor celebrities. He had a cameo in the Sex Pistols movie *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, and made a record with the German rock band Die Toten Hosen.

In fact Jack Slipper was a brilliant policeman, and had been ever since he was a young officer on traffic duty outside the Royal Albert Hall and leaped on his bike to take down a thug who'd slashed a guardsman's throat. He may have dressed "old school," but he was a very modern policeman. He destroyed the London underworld's "honor among thieves" by assembling a network of "supergrasses"—highly placed gangland informers. And he cracked one important case after another, from a triple slaying of unarmed Shepherd's Bush policemen in 1966 to a £12 million Bank of America robbery.

Nevertheless, he accepted that fate had yoked him to the man who got away, and that he'd forever be the straight man in the Biggs 'n' Slipper double act. Happy to fly out to Japan in 1985 for a Nippon Television special, he chitchatted amiably with his nemesis on a satellite linkup to Brazil. "How are you getting on?" asked Slipper, sounding to *The Guardian's* Tokyo correspondent like a genial headmaster running into an old pupil.

"I'm getting on very well indeed," said Biggs. A few years later a retired Slipper went to Rio to see for himself.

"His villa was bog-standard and in the wrong end of town. His swimming pool was so black with algae even a stickleback couldn't live in it. He was flogging T-shirts to tourists to make a living."

Ronnie's Brazilian son had been a child pop star, Little Biggs, for a couple of years, but that was over. And in the end sun-drenched days and bossa nova beach babes in minimal thongs are small consolation if you're pining for a warm pint and a Marmite sandwich. Over a beer Slipper asked, "So, Ronnie, does crime pay?" Biggs shook his head. "I've left my family and my home. I've got nothing left." In 2001, broke and sick, he returned to Britain after 13,068 days on the run to serve his remaining twenty-eight years—because the prison hospital was the only way he could get access to medical treatment. The Great Train Robber had finally hit the buffers.

Golfing away in retirement, the dogged copper said he wouldn't join the police now—it was "too political." Today's famous British bobbies are self-flagellating administrators, such as a former subordinate of Slipper's turned metropolitan police commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, and his deputy, Brian Paddick, London's "senior gay policeman." For Blair and Paddick, policing seems to involve mainly berating themselves for their force's "systemic racism" and "homophobia." Out in the shires chief constables responded to the July 7 bombings by issuing mandatory green ribbons to their officers so they could show solidarity with British Muslims worried about "Islamophobia." Jack Slipper was "old school" enough to think that the best form of community outreach was to lower the crime rate. And there's not been much of that in the British police recently: long time no see, as he would have said. Slipper of the Yard will be the last detective so styled. To today's Scotland Yard it sounds vaguely parodic. Which, of course, is a big part of the problem. ■

Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's Telegraph Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, and other publications.

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WHO'S WHO

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